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*SOUTH AFRICA VS SCOTLAND*





POOL B — 10 SEPTEMBER 2023

# SOUTH AFRICA VS SCOTLAND

STADE DE MARSEILLE, MARSEILLE

REFEREE: ANGUS GARDNER



18 — 3



# BATTLING *the* BRAVE- HEARTS

Steven Kitshoff looks on as Cheslin Kolbe latches on to Sione Tuipulotu. The Scotland centre of Australian and Samoan heritage was a constant thorn in the flesh of the South Africans.







**Back:** Jasper Wiese · Malcolm Marx · Frans Malherbe · RG Snyman · Jesse Kriel · Marco van Staden · Trevor Nyakane

**Middle:** Faf de Klerk · Manie Libbok · Kurt-Lee Arendse · Bongli Mbonambi · Damian Willemse · Ox Nché · Grant Williams · Cheslin Kolbe

**Front:** Franco Mostert · Pieter-Steph du Toit · Willie le Roux · Siya Kolisi (captain) · Jacques Nienaber (coach)

Damian de Allende · Eben Etzebeth · Steven Kitshoff · Duane Vermeulen

## SQUAD UPDATES

Scrumhalf Faf de Klerk earned his 50th Springbok cap against Scotland while there was a notable change at No 8 from the warm-up against New Zealand, with Jasper Wiese preferred to Duane Vermeulen.

Poignantly, Malcolm Marx was the starting hooker. It would be his only action at the World Cup because of a training ground accident the following week.





Left: Ox Nché and the Springbok forwards wait for Trevor Nyakane to complete the front row.

**O**n the 11-hour ferry journey from Corsica to Toulon, the discussion among the Springboks was that they were docking in France to play a match as important as their last World Cup game, the final against England in 2019.

They had to treat their opening game against Scotland that seriously because their Pool B was so competitive. World Rugby had done the draw too early (in December 2020) for France 2023 and nearly all of the top teams in the world were in the Springboks' side of the draw.

The Boks' arrival in the naval town of Toulon was a homecoming of sorts for Cheslin Kolbe because he was playing for RC Toulon at the time. Coach Nienaber won favour with local journalists on arrival when he delegated

media duty to Kolbe. Kolbe said: "We are here in Toulon to prepare for a 'final' against Scotland. Our pool is so tough that we cannot regard this match in any other way."

It was put to Kolbe that the Boks were one of the favourites for the tournament and should beat Scotland. He replied: "The favourites tag will not make us better than Scotland, only thorough preparation will help us, nothing else. Scotland are ranked fifth in the world and we know that they have targeted this game. It is vital that we hit the ground running from our first training session."

It was baking hot in Toulon at that time and Kolbe said the Boks felt at home after cooking in Corsica.

"We could have gone home after the match in London but instead we chose to make a sacrifice and extend our time on the road by training in the heat and humidity of Corsica,"

Below: Franco Mostert carries forcefully against Scotland as a menacing Frans Malherbe lines up Scotland defender Zander Fagerson. Looking on are Eben Etzebeth and Manie Lobbok.



he said. "We are prepared to do whatever it takes to defend the World Cup."

The Boks trained ahead of the Scotland match at the Stade Mayol, the home ground of Toulon, and while the training sessions were fierce, their off-time environment was idyllic. They had booked out the luxurious seaside Hotel Grand des Sablettes, which was equipped with a state-of-the-art gym, while spacious rooms looked out onto the sun-kissed beach.

The Boks caught a ferry across a beautiful bay to their training sessions. The locals were pleased to have the world champions in town, and South African flags and Springbok insignia were in liberal attendance while the Toulon train station was adorned with pictures of Siya Kolisi and also Trevor Nyakane, who is popular in France as a charismatic player with Racing 92.

On the eve of the match, the Boks travelled the 65km to Marseille where a crowd of 64 000 awaited kick-off at the Stade de Marseille (Stade

Vélodrome). A large tartan army constituted much of that crowd and the intimidating skirl of bagpipes added to the oppressive 30°C heat. Outside the stadium a unicyclist juggled knives with a rugby ball balanced on his head. The Scots might have cherished such a nimble-fingered athlete among their ranks as they challenged a formidable Springbok side that had climbed from fourth to second in the world rankings after record-breaking defeats of New Zealand and Wales.



Faf de Klerk launches an attack against Scotland under the watchful eye of captain Siya Kolisi.

Right: Duane Vermeulen and Siya Kolisi share a moment in leadership.







*THIS IMAGE:* Kurt-Lee Arendse is sandwiched between Duhan van der Merwe (left) and Finn Russell.

*LEFT:* The Scotland game plan was based on an all-out attack but the Springbok defence was more than up to it. In the top image, Jesse Kriel stops Jack Dempsey in his tracks with the help of Siya Kolisi. RG Snyman (middle) takes on Jamie Ritchie and Dave Cherry and (bottom), Bongi Mbonambi and Jasper Wiese halt a Scotland attack while Faf de Klerk looks on.





**Right:** Scotland hooker George Turner has the unenviable task of stopping Steven Kitshoff in full flight. Worse still for Turner, another Springbok prop in Frans Malherbe is about to add his weight to Kitshoff's charge. Manie Libbok is in the background.



**Left:** Damian de Allende had his hands full during this match. In the top image he absorbs a tackle from flyhalf Finn Russell, and in the bottom picture he enters into a conversation with the Scotland forwards, including Zander Fagerson and captain Jamie Ritchie (on the right).



There were several changes to the Bok side that had thumped the All Blacks. Nienaber brought in Jasper Wiese at No 8 for Duane Vermeulen, Kolbe for Makazole Mapimpi on the left wing, Damian de Allende at 12 for André Esterhuizen and Jesse Kriel came in for Canan Moodie at outside centre.

The bench looked a touch more conventional, with Grant Williams joining Willie le Roux as a second backline replacement in a six-two split.

Poignantly, Malcolm Marx would have had no way of knowing that this would be his sole appearance in France – he would be badly injured in training the following week.

Before a ball was kicked in anger, South Africans were howling with outrage. Their beloved team appeared for the warm-up in colours that could have been thrust on them by vengeful aliens.

It was a strip that launched a thousand jokes and gave Checkers' delivery service an inadvertent shot in the arm. Their directors must have been dancing in the boardroom at the free publicity as Springbok fans showed wonderful invention in voicing their disapproval of the teal green and white strip that was also likened to a Listerine bottle and a can of Creme Soda.

World Rugby insisted on the teams taking turns to wear change strips that looked bizarre to fans with normal eyesight, and the method in their madness was to make the matches watchable to the colour-blind.

One such sufferer told a Cape radio station: "The blue of Scotland and the [traditional] green of the Springboks would have made it impossible to distinguish the two sets of players. If they had worn their original kits, I would have simply seen 30 guys running around. Instead, I could follow the game as never before and I loved it."

The Springbok recipe for Scotland was always going to be a basic one – an overwhelming dose of physicality and a dash of panache if required.

Marseille is an ancient port city, with many a dimly lit alley, and this game was the equivalent of Scotland being dragged down the cobbled street of one of them and given a good clobbering.

You could see how Scotland wanted to play – at breakneck speed – but the long arm of the Springboks grabbed them by the scruff of the neck and pulled them into a close-quarter wrestle that could have only one winner.

The Scots battled bravely but with the game fought in the trenches and away from the open space they craved, the swords of the Bravehearts were no match for the Springbok sledgehammers.

There was a skirmish that kind of summed up the game. The Scotland scrumhalf Ben White had taken umbrage with De Allende and, in an instant, players hurtled in from everywhere.



**Above:** Malcolm Marx in a moment of introspection during the Scotland game. He had no clue that he would not play again in the World Cup because of a training ground injury the following week.





**When I saw that bit of space for Kurt-Lee I knew what to do because I have done that look-the-other-way kick a thousand times in practice. I was stoked that it came off. You do these things so often at training and sometimes in a game your instinct takes over.**

**MANIE LIBBOK, SPRINGBOK FLYHALF**  
ON HIS CROSS-KICK TO ARENDESE



**Left:** Damian Willemse is in attack mode as Malcolm Marx backs him up. Scotland's Grant Gilchrist can only look on.

In one standoff, the Scottish skipper, Jamie Ritchie – no shorty at 1.90m – grappled with Eben Etzebeth, but when Eben the Angry broke into that fearsome glare that once reduced Wallaby prop Allan Ala'alatoa to a quivering wreck, Ritchie visibly wilted.

That symbolic moment set the tone and it was reinforced a little later when Scotland's very own slab of South African beef, Duhan van der Merwe, lined up Kolisi for a tackle, but the Springbok captain bowled him over and onto his backside with contemptuous ease.

But few Scots suffered more than Finn Russell, the enigmatic flyhalf who shouldered so much of his team's hopes. Time and again the Bok defence shot up and cut him down. Once, he clattered into Kurt-Lee Arendse and was lucky to escape a card for his no-arms approach, but he did add bruised ribs to the bloody wounds on his nose and cheek. The Scottish fans thought Arendse in some way

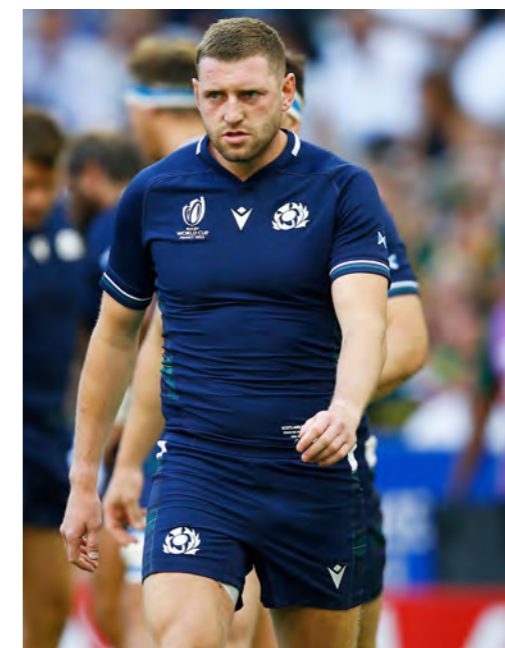
had erred but once they saw the replay, their sudden silence was a guilty verdict. Referee Angus Gardner's decision went the way of South Africa.

On the subject of cards, the game might have taken a different turn if an incident in the opening minutes had been picked up by the officials. Kriel had been upright in a front-on tackle on Jack Dempsey, with his head appearing to clash with the face of the No 8, but it was missed by Gardner and the TMO ignored it too.

In essence, the Scotland plan was for the forwards to give Russell a platform to unlock space out wide for fleet-footed attackers in Van der Merwe and the equally lethal Darcy Graham, but the plan stayed on the blackboard.

In a tense first half, two Manie Libbok penalties had South Africa ahead but Scotland earned a morale-boosting scrum penalty shortly before half-time, slotted by Russell. Their coach,

**Right:** Much of Scotland's hopes rested on the shoulders of playmaker Finn Russell but the Springboks shut him down at every turn. Here the flyhalf's frustration is evident.





**Left:** Bongsi Mbonambi enjoys the attention of the fans after a hard-fought match against the tough Scots.

**Middle:** Scotland No 8 Jack Dempsey is smashed backward by Cheslin Kolbe.

**Bottom:** Eben Etzebeth and Pieter-Steph du Toit acknowledge the South African supporters in the stands at the Stade de Marseille. A tricky first-round encounter had been dealt with and the Boks were under way.



**Left:** Springbok replacement scrumhalf Grant Williams, wearing a Scotland jersey, is dwarfed by Duane Vermeulen (left) and RG Snyman as they leave the field.



### THE TEAMS

Steven Kitshoff	1	Pierre Schoeman
Malcolm Marx	2	George Turner
Frans Malherbe	3	Zander Fagerson
Eben Etzebeth	4	Richie Gray
Franco Mostert	5	Grant Gilchrist
Siya Kolisi (c)	6	Jamie Ritchie (c)
○ Pieter-Steph du Toit	7	Rory Darge
Jasper Wiese	8	Jack Dempsey
Faf de Klerk	9	Ben White
Manie Libbok	10	Finn Russell
Cheslin Kolbe	11	Duhan van der Merwe
Damian de Allende	12	Sione Tuipulotu
Jesse Kriel	13	Huw Jones
○ Kurt-Lee Arendse	14	Darcy Graham
Damian Willemse	15	Blair Kinghorn

### SUBSTITUTES

Bongi Mbonambi	16	Dave Cherry
Ox Nché	17	Jamie Bhatti
Trevor Nyakane	18	WP Nel
RG Snyman	19	Scott Cummings
Marco van Staden	20	Matt Fagerson
Duane Vermeulen	21	Ali Price
Grant Williams	22	Cameron Redpath
Willie le Roux	23	Ollie Smith

### SCORERS

**SOUTH AFRICA 18 (6)** — Tries: Pieter-Steph du Toit (47), Kurt-Lee Arendse (50). Conversion: Faf de Klerk (52). Penalties: Manie Libbok (13, 25).  
**SCOTLAND 3 (3)** — Penalty: Finn Russell (40' +1).

Gregor Townsend, leapt to his feet with a fist pump and his team headed into the changing rooms 6-3 down and convinced they could upset the champions.

But that was akin to Jack shaking the beanstalk to wake the giant and the Springbok team that re-took the field bristled with malicious intent.

Within minutes the Bok forwards rampaged through the phases to set up Pieter-Steph du Toit to plough through Scotland's Samoan centre Sione Tuipulotu for a try.

The jubilant Bok fans had barely sat down when Libbok sprinkled some magic on the otherwise brawny proceedings. He saw Arendse in rare space out wide and he wrong-footed the defenders by looking one way and kicking the other. Such was this brilliance that Arendse simply had to catch the ball and saunter to the line.

The wind in the Scottish sails disappeared with a whoosh after that two-tries-in-four-minutes surge and they were left for dead.

There was no further scoring in the remaining 30 minutes and only desperate Scottish defence prevented Kolbe and Williams from scoring.

By the time Gardner looked at his watch for the final time, the chants of "Scotland, Scotland"

had ebbed away and the stadium DJ, sensing the mood and having had some good advice from a South African, blasted the Mandoza classic "Nkalakatha" through the speakers as the Bok fans flooded down to the lower stands to roar their approval to the players.

The score of 18-3 flattered the Scots and there would have been a more accurate reflection of the game on the scoreboard if Libbok had not fluffed three shots at goal and Faf de Klerk, who assumed the kicking duties late in the game, another.

The pre-tournament question of whether the Boks had a flyhalf who could kick the big goals when it matters had been underlined and many a fan was pinning for Handré Pollard...

## KEY MOMENT

Move over Mona Lisa. Manie Libbok's brilliantly disguised cross-kick to Kurt-Lee Arendse, so nonchalantly performed, should be framed and hung in the Louvre. It was a beauty that lifted the spirits of the Boks by the same measure that it sunk the Scots.





# THEY SAID IT

## RASSIE ERASMUS

SA RUGBY DIRECTOR

### ON SCOTLAND BEING THE "BIGGIE"

"Long before we got to France, this was the game I was most worried about. We saw Scotland as a hurdle that had to be overcome because if we got past them, then it was relatively easy games against Romania and Tonga. There had been talk about how we had to beat Ireland but I said, 'Hold on. If we beat Scotland then it is not a train smash if we lose to Ireland. It is fine, we will still make the quarters, but Scotland is the biggie.' The pressure was off by beating Scotland."



## SIYA KOLISI

SPRINGBOK CAPTAIN

### ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SPRINGBOKS STARTING THE WORLD CUP WELL

"Scotland are a niggly team and it took us a while to get going. We got there in the end, but we have to get out of the blocks better than that if we are to be contenders."

"We knew that Scotland were targeting us in what has been called the Group of Death and we planned to shut them down at source and not let them get their game going."

"Our intensity has to get better. That is what we spoke about at half-time when we were just 6-3 up - we knew we had the beating of them but we needed better composure."

"The composure came, and the pressure produced points. It is a big relief to get this difficult opener out of the way."

### ON STOPPING DUHAN VAN DER MERWE, WHO HAD SCORED 18 TRIES IN 30 TESTS

"The way we kept him out was special. We knew we had to keep their backline on the back foot. It was very rewarding when we kept them from scoring when they had their best period with the ball, and then we went and scored."

"Our intensity has to get better. That is what we spoke about at half-time when we were just 6-3 up - we knew we had the beating of them but we needed better composure."

"The composure came, and the pressure produced points. It is a big relief to get this difficult opener out of the way."

### ON PLAYING IN THE EXCRUCIATING HEAT

"In 2019 we went to Japan early to acclimatise in the heat and it proved crucial. We did something similar this time by going to Corsica after the game against the All Blacks in London. We never went home and we moved toward the heat and it helped us. It was seriously hot out there."



*Malcolm Marx is a man on a mission but, sadly, his time at the World Cup is running out. He would be seriously injured the following week in training.*