‘Hurt’ Robertson looks within after All Blacks shocked by Argentina

AFP- A “hurt” New Zealand coach Scott Robertson said Sunday he would examine his own shortcomings after a shock 38-30 defeat to Argentina, his first loss since taking charge.
New Zealand’s hopes of winning the Rugby Championship title for a fifth time in a row took a major blow in their opening match in Wellington on Saturday as they conceded the most points in any home Test in their history.

Robertson, who lifted seven successive Super Rugby titles with Canterbury Crusaders, had his reputation dented after having won his first three Tests since replacing Ian Foster.

New Zealand supporters had hoped Robertson would inject a winning formula into an All Blacks side that stuttered under Foster, culminating in last year’s World Cup final loss to South Africa.

But after two unconvincing narrow home wins over England, followed by a comfortable victory against Fiji in San Diego, Robertson’s team were mistake-ridden and physically outplayed by the South Americans.

“You look at yourself firstly and you go: ‘What could I have done personally as the head coach?’,” Robertson told reporters.

“How could I have framed this week a bit better? How could I have created a bit more edge?

“I’m hurt but you know, you roll on. It’s pretty important you dust yourself off quickly. If I’m a bit gloomy it’ll go on the rest of the group.”

Robertson needs to identify quickly how to reverse the result – the teams will clash again in Auckland on Saturday.

– ‘A different animal’ –

Robertson pinpointed some areas to address this week.

His team’s inability to get out of their own half efficiently had been problematic, he said.

He also lamented the lack of a single scrum until the game’s 61st minute, removing a key New Zealand set-piece weapon from the contest.

Having failed to win their first 27 Tests against the All Blacks, Argentina have won three of the last nine.

Argentina captain Pablo Matera started in all three wins, including the upsets in Sydney in 2020 and Christchurch in 2022.

“I just remember the first time, how emotional we were. We believed it was something that was impossible,” said Mater, who was an inspirational figure as Argentina dominated the final 20 minutes in Wellington.

“Over the last couple of years, this is a team that is getting more and more ambitious and working harder and reaching higher standards.”

New Zealand imploded under pressure exerted by the Pumas, with two wayward passes leading to an Argentina attacking five-metre scrum and the clinching try for Agustin Creevy

The Pumas are targeting back-to-back wins against the All Blacks for the first time at Eden Park on Saturday, but Matera knows it will be tough.

“I knew we had a big chance of winning but we know we’ll have to step up next week. We know there’s a different animal

coming to Auckland," he said.

"It's going to be a completely different game but if we get better, we can win again."

AFP