All Blacks accept South Africa apology for Haka disruption

AFP – The All Blacks on Tuesday accepted an apology from South Africa after fireworks, music and a jet fly-over partly drowned out New Zealand's Haka before last weekend's Test match.
The closing moments of the Haka – a traditional Maori war dance – were affected as the pre-match schedule went awry at Ellis Park in Johannesburg on Saturday.

The South African Rugby Union wrote to their New Zealand counterparts to apologise, but the All Blacks camp said the noisy disruptions were not taken as a sign of disrespect.

"In all honesty you sometimes get a bit of chaos around that (the Haka)," All Blacks assistant coach Jason Ryan told New Zealand media in Cape Town.

"The South African players themselves stood there and respected it as they always do, it's probably the officials are the ones who need the uppercut," he joked.

"They've made the apology, it's fine."

The Springboks came from behind to win 31-27, cementing their place at the top of the Rugby Championship table, eight points ahead of second-placed New Zealand, the title-holders.

The Haka, which dates back to the 'Original All Blacks' tour to Europe in 1905, is performed by New Zealand after the national anthems and before kick-off in each international they play.

Rian Oberholzer, chief executive of SA Rugby, said the deafening jet fly-over, loud music and fireworks had simply

been bad timing.

A sound engineer mistakenly interpreted the cheering of the capacity 62,000 crowd as a sign that the Haka had finished and restarted the music programme.

“It was never the intention to schedule any activities that would coincide with such an iconic moment of any Test match against the All Blacks,” Oberholzer said in a statement.

“That it occurred was a result of timekeeping challenges and simple human error.”

SA Rugby will ensure there is no repeat when the teams meet again in Cape Town on Saturday, Oberholzer added.

All Blacks loose forward Ethan Blackadder said they appreciated that South Africa had said sorry, pointing out that “it’s pretty hard to get the timings right for an aeroplane”.

“Personally I didn’t notice it,” he added. “We were all just eyeing up our opponents.”

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