

# Ireland seek to overcome former coach Schmidt's Wallabies

AFP- Ireland head coach Andy Farrell will want to bow out before he takes a sabbatical with a comprehensive victory over Australia coached by former Irish handler Joe Schmidt on Saturday.

For Farrell it would also be a useful psychological blow as his sabbatical involves him being head coach of the British & Irish Lions who tour Australia next year.

The Irish will want to put on a performance befitting the occasion, commemorating the 150th anniversary of Irish Rugby.

The Wallabies arrive on the back of a disappointing defeat by Scotland which dashed their hopes of emulating the 1984 side's Grand Slam in beating the home nations of England, Wales, the Scots and Ireland.

AFP Sport picks out three talking points surrounding the match:

Suaalii, the new Folau

If there was one name Farrell probably hoped to be missing from the Wallabies team sheet it was Joseph-Aukuso Suaalii.

The 21-year-old cross-code star has recovered from a dead arm he suffered in the loss to Scotland.

Schmidt will want to see a similar display to his man-of-the-match performance in the astonishing 42-37 win over England earlier this month.

The Wallabies coach is delighted to have snaffled him from

rugby league, when other rugby union stars have gone in the opposite direction.

Farrell knows what it is like to cross over having moved to rugby union after an outstanding career in rugby league.

The 49-year-old Englishman sees similarities between Suaalii and another former cross-code star.

“The best is yet to come, I would have thought,” said Farrell.

“For everyone that’s seen him play League, you all know he’s a special talent.

“His idol there is Israel Folau and he certainly looks like Israel Folau in his heyday, doesn’t he.

“He’s only going to get better.”

Prendergast’s coming of age

Farrell has his own 21-year-old gem, or so he hopes, in Sam Prendergast after his selection ahead of Jack Crowley at fly-half.

Until the Argentina match a fortnight ago Crowley had been the first choice and was seen as likely to fill the huge vacuum left by the retirement of Johnny Sexton after last year’s Rugby World Cup.

However, former under-20 star Prendergast appears to have nosed ahead.

A solid debut as a replacement against Argentina – he replaced Crowley after an hour – was followed by him displaying a full box of tricks in his first Test start in the victory over Fiji.

Farrell said Prendergast deserved his chance against one of the southern hemisphere giants, albeit in a process of rebuilding after their disastrous first round exit at the

World Cup.

His message to the youngster was clear.

“To grow on the performance of last week, you know?” said Farrell.

“I thought, and so did he, that his performance was good.

“A few errors thrown in there, I thought he was nice and composed, how he controlled the game coming off the bench against Argentina as well.

“Putting it all together in an 80-minute performance.”

Farrell said not too much should be read into the call.

“I suppose with the two young lads, this game won’t define them,” he said.

“It’ll be a good part of their development and that’s what you’re hoping for.”

Farrell and Schmidt, battle of wits

Saturday’s match will be as intriguing for the tactical battle in the coaches’ box between Farrell and his former boss in the Ireland set-up, Schmidt, as that on the pitch.

Although Farrell has changed the manner in which Ireland play since Schmidt left after the 2019 Rugby World Cup, there could still be enough inside knowledge from the Kiwi to hurt his former side.

As an All Blacks assistant coach he put this into effect in the World Cup quarter-final victory over Ireland last year – a devastated Sexton was barely able to shake hands with Schmidt afterwards.

Schmidt, though, is in rebuilding mode with the Wallabies. Six victories and six defeats this year tell its own tale, so a

scalp as prized as the Irish may be beyond them.

“I feel like I’m paddling hard, but I’m not necessarily going forward,” said Schmidt.

“But I think we’re keeping our head above water.”

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