24 October 2019

Rugby World Cup 2019

While the (in)accuracy of economic predictions often leaves much to be desired, it seems our ability to gaze into the RWC crystal ball is impeccable. After some titanic clashes this past weekend, we've got another exciting weekend ahead. On the downside, this year's RWC is nearing its end – meaning no more distractions from reality (and less reason for us to try our hand at some humour).

As we get closer to the business end of the tournament, the jokes are a bit more difficult to come by – unless of course they're about Faf de Klerk or Willie le Roux…

A quick recap of the quarter-finals:

Quarter-Final 1

The north versus south clash saw England take on Australia. Although we expected the English to win, they can boast an impressive 40-16 against the Wallabies. Much of this came down to a sturdy performance by the northerners who capitalized on far too many Aussie mistakes.

Quarter-Final 2

The second knock-out match was again a north versus south clash, but this time with a different, the south came out on top. The All Blacks managed to score seven tries against a lackluster and disappointing Irish team, the former world number one, in a convincing 46-14 victory. The All Blacks, clinical as ever, move one step closer in what many expect to be their third consecutive title.

Quarter-Final 3

This was a very tight contest between the Welsh and the French. The outcome was difficult to call, as much depended on which French mentality would arrive on the day. The Dragons struggled, but in the end managed to pip *Les Blues* with just one point to win 20-19. Starting off the game incredibly strong, it was France's to throw away towards the end, which they did thanks to a red card early in the second half. Wales struggled against a 14-man French team, and after that performance will have to prove their mettle in the semis.

Quarter-Final 4

This was our most eagerly (and nervously) anticipated quarter-final. Giant-killers and host nation Japan came out with all guns blazing, hoping to make their first ever knockout qualification even more legendary. A tough first half saw South Africa defending with all that they could muster, and many were concerned they wouldn't be able to keep it up in the second half. Thankfully, the Springboks' try line was far less porous than South Africa's borders. A change in strategy in the second half saw South Africa walk out victorious 26-3, although the score is not a true reflection of how tightly the Japanese contested this match.

It was a tough match for supporters, many of us who had come to love the wiry Japanese team but wanted to see the Bokke go through. Despite being knocked out, Japan have proven that they are not to be underestimated in future. We look forward to seeing them pull off more upsets in future (just not against South Africa again, please).

Cirrus Semi-Final Predictions for RWC 2019:

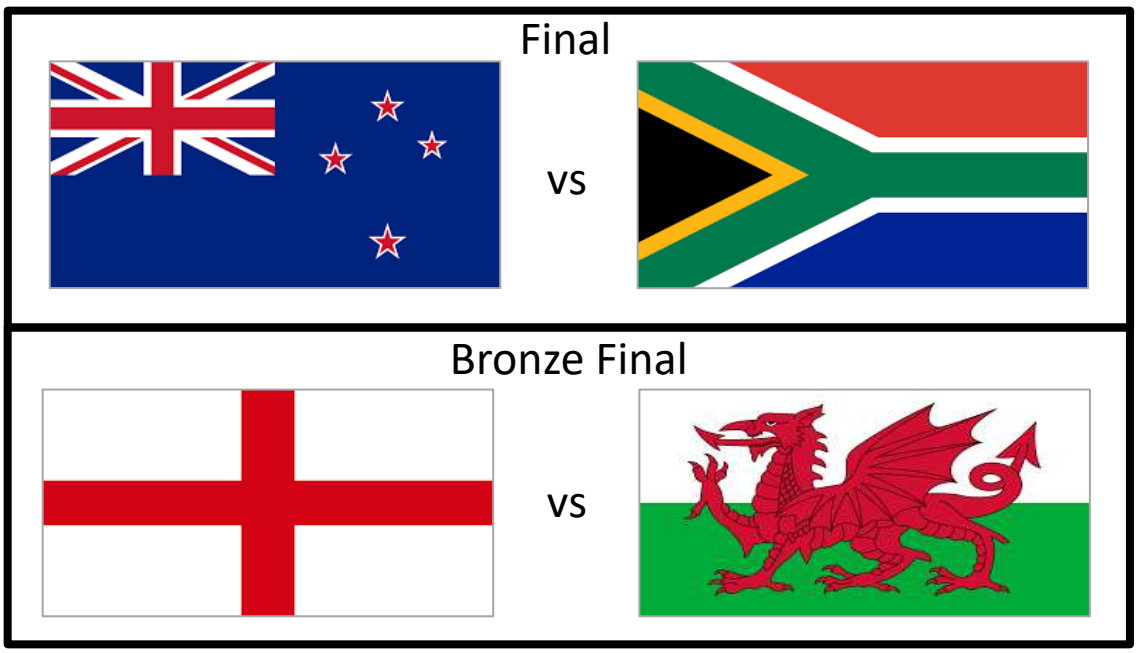
Both semi-finals are a northern versus southern hemisphere contest. The first sees England take on New Zealand. The All Blacks are the clear favourites to book a spot in their third consecutive final. And while they do look potent out on the field, the English seem ready to capitalize on any mistakes just as they did against the Wallabies. We wouldn't be opposed to an upset, but we expect to see New Zealand come through and make their way to the final.

The second semi-final sees Wales take on South Africa. While there may be less consensus about who will come out on top, we believe South Africa should take the win to meet the All Blacks in an epic final.

After a disappointing performance last week, Willie le Roux will be back on the field this weekend despite our assertions he should be seconded to the Proteas because they can't seem to catch a ball either. And despite being kicked out this past weekend, the French have managed to get one of their best players into the semi-finals in the form of referee Jérôme Garcès. The Springboks have a very poor record under his match officiating, although we hope this is more correlation rather than causation…

Wales were, frankly, disappointing in the performance against France and so we believe the Springboks will come out on top. The Dragons may have a point to prove after last weekend and combined with controversial Garcès, may result in an upset – but we see these chances as quite slim.

With just two games awaiting us this weekend, we don't know what we'll do with all the spare time. But we do believe we'll see New Zealand take on South Africa in the final, with England and Wales battling it out for bronze. Let's hope the southern hemisphere can prove their worth.



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