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## Australia Eyes Strong Start Against Springboks

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**CAPE TOWN, Aug 21 (Reuters)** Australia coach Joe Schmidt is urging his team to start stronger in Saturday's second Rugby Championship test against South Africa in Cape Town, aiming to avoid the slow opening that almost cost them last weekend's historic victory.

In the first test at Johannesburg's Ellis Park, the Springboks dominated early, racing to a 22-0 lead within the first 18 minutes. Australia rallied in the second half to claim a stunning 38-22 win, their first at the venue in 62 years. Schmidt acknowledged the challenge will be greater this time, with South Africa unlikely to allow such a comeback.

"We can't wait around," Schmidt said Thursday in Cape Town. "We can't wait for the Springboks to bring their game. We have to kick off our game a lot better than we did last week. We've focused on that all week."

Injury forced a late change, with Dylan Pietsch sidelined due to a fractured jaw. Schmidt has handed a debut to former Rugby Sevens wing Corey Toole, known for his speed in Super Rugby.

“He’s a great young player,” Schmidt said. “He’s come from the Sevens program, which several South Africans have also done. He’s adapting well, and this will be a big learning curve for him.”

Captain Harry Wilson will miss the match after failing to recover from an injury sustained last weekend. The setback is mitigated by the return of Rob Valetini at number eight, who has limited game time this season.

“Losing Harry is not ideal,” Schmidt admitted. “Rob’s played only 40 minutes so far, but it’s good to have him back, and I’m confident he will perform strongly.”

South Africa made ten changes to their lineup as coach Rassie Erasmus reintroduced experienced players Handre Pollard (flyhalf), Damian de Allende (inside center), and Willie le Roux (fullback).

“It’s been a while since a game just got away from us,” Erasmus said. “It’s not a good feeling when that happens. You know when your mom sends you a message saying, ‘My kid, I still love you,’ things aren’t lekker.”

Despite last week’s outcome, Erasmus confirmed the Springboks will maintain their expansive style rather than revert to a conservative approach.

“I feel Australia is playing much like we did in 2019 defend, defend, and capitalize on errors,” Erasmus said, referencing the team that won the Rugby World Cup six years ago. “We don’t believe that’s the way to win the next World Cup. We have worked hard over the last two to three years to develop this style, and we will continue with it.”

The second test promises an intense showdown as both sides aim to assert dominance early, with Australia seeking a faster start and South Africa determined to tighten their play after the first match’s setback.