

Roses Remain Undefeated at Nations Cup

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OAKVILLE, ON - Canada met England Tuesday evening in the final round-robin match of the 2011 Women's Nation's Cup in Oakville, Ontario

In the end, crisp English passing and relentless pressure on Canada resulted in a hard fought 22-10 win. The victory gives England a 3-0 record through the round-robin stage, but the two teams will play again for the championship on Saturday – again at Appelby College, in Oakville.

In the first game of the evening South Africa scored two tries in the final two minutes to beat the USA 26-22 for its first win of the tournament. Those two countries will play off for third and fourth on Saturday - kicking off at 2 PM EST.

Team Canada began strong in their match with Sevens stars Jen Kish and Kelly Russell leading the charge against England. It was Emily Scarratt of England, though, who managed to get the first score on to the board; kicking the ball smoothly between the posts for an England penalty.

Both teams looking equally matched, Canada and England played a game of push and pull. England's Alice Richardson managed to take advantage of a gap in Canada's line to drive through towards the tryline. Smooth control of the ball placed England precariously close to gaining their first try, but any forward gain was stopped by a scrum given to host team.

The game remained evenly matched throughout, but Canada, donned in red and black, scored the first try. Canada's Andrea Burk was able to dodge England's defense and race the yards to the goal posts, allowing Cheryl Phillips to finish the score in her opponent's end zone.

Ghislaine Landry of Canada came close to another try before the clock ran out, but was stopped near the target. Canada led 5-3 into half-time.

The start of the second-half had England kicking off deep into Canada's territory. In such a closely paired match, each yard gained pushed the other team to return in kind. The first try in the second-half went to England's #20 Natasha Hunt, who dove into the corner for the try, assisted by Maggie Alphonsi.

A fumbled ball by Canada was a second opportunity that England took full advantage of, with brilliant ball handling and player switching, the ball landed neatly into the hands of Alphonsi who scored to put England well ahead. Adding more points to the board, Scarratt gained the conversion, England leading 15-5.

"We made mistakes that we planned on not making," said Coach John Tait. "We were a little bit overwhelmed and we let it get to us, but we're looking forward to Saturday because we can do better than that."

Once again, the battle on the field raged over the entire distance, switching from side to side. As cheers and loud support for the hosting team was shouted from the boisterous crowd,

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Canada continued to push forward but England's defense remained resolute. Supported by her teammates, Canada's #21 Kayla Mack scored another try, closing the gap to 15-10.

It was a pitched battle, but England eventually prevailed, as Amy Garnett weaved beautifully through the chaos on the field, moving from the centre to the sidelines to score the final try of the game. Scarratt closed the game with the conversion kick, to make the final score England 22 – Canada 10.

“It was a very intense game. It's so different from any other kind of rugby I've ever played before – the intensity and fast pace. I really enjoyed it,” said Canada's Kelsey Willoughby, who played as a starter for the first time. “It was a good game. I'm sure each team has something they haven't shown yet and I'm really looking to this Saturday.”

The finals will take place this Saturday, Aug. 13 beginning at 2pm at Appleby College.