

Ireland prevail after dour struggle



Simon Zebo leads a counter attack for Ireland against France at the Aviva Stadium last Saturday

This was expected to be the most entertaining Six Nations Match with two running teams, but turned out to be a dour struggle.

The big French team found it hard to get going but after scoring a try in the last quarter through sub Taofifenua, lock weighing a massive 135 kilo and playing with Toulon, narrowed the margin to a try and conversion for the French to draw level, at 18-11.

Ireland prevailed and had to defend fiercely in the last ten minutes.

The Irish defence had to use two to three players to take down centre Bastareaud, also with Toulon and weighing 125 kilos.

The defending was excellent as these men managed to take out some key players.

Heaslip got injured also in a ruck after a knee in the back and a grab around the neck, from Pape, who was sent off.

Heaslip is likely be out of the remaining Six Nations games.

Johnny Sexton, man of the match, scored most Irish scores but had to be substituted for some stitches after a heavy clash with Bastareaud.

Ireland were always ahead and with good discipline conceded less penalties. Irish Coach Joe Schmidt gives yellow cards in training for fouls so the players have great discipline in contrast to the French.

Match Ref Wayne Barnes from England is known for his strict interpretation of the rules and the Irish benefitted in the first half. You could say Ireland won ugly as one fan said afterwards with no try and winning by penalty kicks alone.

The game seemed to change after the French brought in a fresh front row at 50 minutes and Parra 15 minutes later.

The morale of our near neighbours in the crowd from Nantes was lifted as the French singing began.

The Irish had to work harder. The French started to play their familiar running game as the Irish pack tired.

It certainly was a grand finale and made it worthwhile to be there.

The next home game against England will be a harder test against another really physical team.

This should be the clash of the Championship and could determine who will win the 6 Nations this year.

Kieran Walsh