# Wales' Summer Tests Begin: Challenges Ahead as Key Players Absent



### Wales Faces Challenging Summer Tests Amidst Key Player Absences

**Wales vs. South Africa at Twickenham**  
Wales kicks off their summer Test schedule against world champions South Africa at Twickenham on Saturday, marking the first of three summer Tests. They face Australia in two subsequent matches before an autumn series that includes games against Fiji, the Wallabies, and the Springboks.

**Key Talking Points**

**Odds Against Wales**: After six consecutive losses and the absence of several key players, Wales enters the Twickenham match as heavy underdogs, with bookmakers offering odds of 13-1.

**Lengthy Injury List**: Warren Gatland’s squad is missing several front-line players, including Jac Morgan, Taulupe Faletau, Tomos Williams, and Josh Adams. English club players like Nick Tompkins and Dafydd Jenkins are also unavailable due to the match falling outside World Rugby’s summer Test window.

**Mason Grady’s New Role**: Mason Grady will be starting his first Test at inside centre. This tactical shift aims to involve him more in the play.

**Introduction of New Laws**: Three new laws will be tested to improve game flow. These include changes to the offside rules from kicks, a ban on the ‘crocodile roll’ in tackles, and removal of the option to choose a scrum from a free-kick.

**Struggle for Wins**: Wales has struggled since Gatland's return, losing 12 of 18 Tests. With matches against formidable opponents in the coming months, a win could significantly boost morale but seems uncertain.

**England vs. Japan Highlights**

England’s tour opener against Japan in Tokyo on Saturday will also see veteran coach Eddie Jones face his former assistant, Steve Borthwick, now England's head coach. England enters the game as strong favorites, with Jones recently returning to coach Japan.

**Key Talking Points**

**Master vs. Apprentice**: The match offers an intriguing subplot as Eddie Jones confronts his former protege, Borthwick.

**Preparation for New Zealand**: England eyes this fixture as a build-up to their New Zealand matches, with Borthwick fielding a near first-choice lineup.

**Fly-Half Responsibility**: With George Ford injured, Marcus Smith will lead England’s attack, aiming to showcase his leadership and creativity.

**Tom Curry's Return**: Curry’s return from a career-threatening hip injury will be closely watched as he steps off the bench.

**Japan's New Faces**: Eddie Jones has introduced four debutants, including untested full-back Yoshitaka Yazaki, in a bid to rebuild the Japanese team ahead of the 2027 World Cup.

**Additional Developments in Rugby**

* Kurtley Beale Returns for Australia: After a four-year hiatus, Kurtley Beale rejoins the Australian squad under new coach Joe Schmidt. The Wallabies face Wales in a two-Test series in July.
* England in Talks for USA Test: England plans to play a landmark Test against the USA in 2025, marking their first American tour in 24 years.
* Wales’ Squad Adjustments: Warren Gatland has made several changes due to injuries, with new call-ups including James Botham and Regan Grace.

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These fixtures are highly anticipated, featuring tactical battles, fresh talent, and significant returns, offering a compelling start to the rugby summer Tests.