

France

2019 finish – 5th place.

France enters the six nations on the back of a one-point defeat to Wales in the quarter finals of the World cup. While French teams are renowned for their implosions, this quarter final might just be their biggest meltdown. France entered the final half hour of the game nine points up and were marching their way towards another try. However, the French implosion began to unfold when second row Sebastien Vahaamahina was sent off after lashing out at Welsh flanker Aaron Wainwright with an elbow. It is because of this that we must ask the age-old question, what French team will turn up in this year six nations?

What's new

Regarding the French this year, this question might be better put by asking what has remained the same in their setup. France have swapped out their manager Jacques Brunel with Fabian Galthie taking over the reins. Former French captain Guilhem Guirado has also retired with the Toulon flanker Charles Olivion handed the captaincy. The changes don't stop there with Galthie including a total of 19 uncapped players in his 42-man squad. Former regulars like Camille Lopez and Rabah Slimani have been left out with a big emphasis placed on youth in the squad. In fact, just 1 player in the entire squad has more than 50 caps in Gael Fickou.

Player to Watch

Virimi Vakatawa

One man to keep an eye out for is the former French sevens specialist Virimi Vakatawa. Now playing his trade with Racing 92 in the Top 14 where he finished as the competitions top scorer last year, his form this year has also been nothing short of exceptional. Vakatawa has the power to match his unrivalled pace meaning he will require a lot of attention from opposing defences.

Predicted Finish

Off every team in rugby, it is no doubt the French that are the hardest to predict. In 2011 France were beaten in the group stage of the world cup by Tonga. Wrote off by everyone the same team went on to reach the world cup final only losing out to the All Blacks by a solitary point. The French have continued to be a mystery with this year expected to be no different. However, with a squad that shows wholesale changes it might take a while for them to click therefore a **4th place** finish is expected.