



SPORT

England settle for third in World Netball Quad Series in South Africa

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Lucianne Bell

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Following the Vitality Roses success against Jamaica's Sunshine Girls in the final match of the international test, England headed to South Africa for the World Netball Quad Series.

The series ran from 21 to 25 January in Cape Town just six months before the Netball World Cup is due to land in the country, the first to be held in the continent.

The previous series was held in London at the Copper Box Arena where the Australian Diamonds edged the Vitality Roses in the final to take home the title.

Ahead of the series, Fran Connolly CEO of England Netball **said**: "After a fantastic home international series, we're looking forward to seeing more incredible netball with four of the top five nations.

"With the Netball World Cup edging closer, this is an opportunity for our Vitality Roses to lay down a marker before the summer and for our fans to see some of the best players in world netball."

The series featured Commonwealth gold medallists Australia, New Zealand, the hosts and of course England.

In the run up to the series, England Netball's Performance Director David Parsons **said**: "This is another big test and provides further opportunities for players to challenge themselves against the best in the world.

"For us it's an opportunity to observe our players in a competitive environment ahead of the Netball World Cup."

The Roses lost their first match of the series campaign 61-55 against the Australian Diamonds.

After the first quarter the Roses led 18-14, but Australia stripped this lead to one at half-time then took control in the third quarter and moved 48-21 ahead.

Eleanor Cardwell shot 93% overall, an impressive return to the Roses side after missing the recent **2-1 series win over Jamaica** to recover from injury.

The introduction of Kiera Austin from Australia in the third quarter was pivotal as they found fluency in their attack, while the defence held firm in the fourth quarter with several key interceptions.

Australia's decisive lead was also helped by numerous errors from Jess Thirlby's Vitality Roses.

Meanwhile, New Zealand dominated hosts South Africa in a 61-41 victory.

The Roses returned to the court taking on South Africa, after an enthralling match a last-second goal from Lenize Potgieter denied the Roses a late win and both teams settled 46-46 a rare Quad Series draw.

After half-time the game was level at 23-23 before South Africa took control moving into a five-point lead with eight minutes remaining.

The Roses levelled the score and were motivated following a suspension of the South African goalkeeper Phumza Maweni for persistent contact, leaving the hosts with six players for the final ten minutes.

England took the lead but the remaining defender Karla Pretorius made a superb interception from the Roses possession giving South Africa the chance to level the game in the final seconds.

Natalie Metcalf, England Captain **said**: "We had a moment to win that game, and that's really hard to take. But credit to our girls for getting ourselves back into that game.

"We were up at times and we need to look at how to keep pushing on and building those leads, credit to South Africa for putting on a really strong game."

On the same day, Australia beat New Zealand which secured them a spot in the final.

England missed out on a place at the final after they lost to New Zealand 55-45, but Helen Housby scored her 1,000th goal for England.

The Roses trailed 21-27 at half-time then levelled at 39-39 in the final quarter, but the Silver Ferns held on to secure a victory and a place at the final.

England ended the group stage without a win and so took on South Africa in the third place play-off, after a well-contested match, claimed the victory 49-42 finishing third in the Quad Series.

South Africa kept the pace with the Roses but after a dominant final quarter England took a seven-goal lead in Cape Town.

Thirlby made multiple changes throughout the game to identify her 12 best players ahead of the World Cup and Jade Clark made her 200th England appearance.

Defensively England dominated the game with the likes of Funmi Fadoju making vital interceptions alongside fellow defender Geva Mentor.

However, similar to the losses against Australia and New Zealand, the Roses struggled to turn this successful defence into goals in the attacking end and continued to get caught out by opposition.

England led by one at half-time and eventually pulled away with a peek of Thirlby's potential best team on court during the closing minutes of the game.

England manager Jess Thirlby **reflected** on the game: "It's been a good journey, we've just got to keep finding a way to compete with those ranked above us.

"They're the most together group that I've worked with and it's an absolute joy to see their resilience grow over the course of January."

Defending their Quad Series title, Australia beat New Zealand 56-50 in a thrilling match after winning all their matches throughout the series.

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