

Boks not fit enough — Henry

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Soweto - Fitness levels played an integral part in the All Blacks comeback to score a late 29-22 victory and disappoint 94000 people at FNB Stadium on Saturday.

While the All Blacks were expected to struggle with the altitude, they appeared the fitter side as the game went into the hour mark, and kept the ball for long periods of time as they ground down the Springbok defence.

In the end the pressure was too much for the Boks and it was a tad unfortunate that captain John Smit missed a crucial tackle on defence that let the game slip from their grasp.

Instead of finishing stronger, the Boks looked jaded and out on their feet, something Richie McCaw picked up just after half-time and used to his team's advantage.

All Black coach Graham Henry paid tribute to their fitness coach Dr Nick Gill, who prepared the team for their mammoth task at FNB stadium.

"It doesn't get any bigger than that. To play in front of that crowd in this stadium is very special. This team is one I would go to war with, they have character and togetherness and this is a very special win for the All Blacks," Henry said at the post match press conference.

"We have to pay tribute to our fitness coach Nick Gill as we were in great shape in those last 10 minutes. Our fitness levels were superb and that and our heart was what got us through this game."

All Black captain Richie McCaw described it as one of his team's finer wins, but pointed to the Boks fitness levels as the turning point in the game. "Early on in the game it feels as if you're running around with rocks in your boots.

But when we saw at half-time the hands go on knees, we knew we certainly had to keep on believing. We never felt like we were struggling and we held onto the ball well in the end. The guys believed in what we are doing and didn't crawl into their shells in the last period," McCaw said. "We don't come from behind too often and even though we played well in the last four weeks, were were still under the pump here tonight. We were in a pressure situation and that shows a fair bit of character to come back like that."

McCaw and his side have already made a clean sweep of this year's Tri-Nations, but more satisfying perhaps was the 3-0 clean sweep of the Springboks this year, which will be a massive psychological boost for the World Cup next year.

Henry is proud of All Blacks.