

Henry says the Springboks shouldn't panic

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Graham Henry has said that the Springboks performances in recent test matches have proven they are a solid side, despite the increasing opinion that there needs to be drastic changes in the South African setup.

The All Blacks coach pinpointed his own side's reversing fortunes after their three losses to the Springboks last year, and he believed the same result this year could give the South Africans a massive boost.

"There is plenty talent to pick from and they won't be panicking – and they shouldn't be panicking," Henry said.

But the Springboks, now with just the solitary competition point in the 2010 Investec Tri Nations, and having lost the title, will need to ask questions of themselves – at least that is what their local media is demanding.

Especially after Peter de Villiers said that his team was prepared and had amended their faults seen earlier in the competition.

There was no doubt it was a vastly improved performance by the Springboks, who all but had the game won, by going back to their roots and putting immense physical pressure on the All Blacks.

However certain players have been deemed ill-prepared or worst still overweight, while question marks exist over the coaching after comparisons with the two sides use of their benches.

The All Blacks reserves, led by players such as Piri Weepu and Israel Dagg, had immediate impact, while the Springboks, first by substituting their best forward Juan Smith and then leaving three fresh men untouched, raised some eyebrows.

The question of fitness will now be the focus of the Springboks in the coming weeks, while Henry praised the All Blacks fitness coach Nick Gill.

"He doesn't often get credit but he's got this team in great shape and it showed in the last 10 minutes, their fitness is superb," Henry said.

"We finished stronger and showed the ability to hang in there, the ability to do the job under all sorts of stress."

While the Springboks will look to try and salvage something from the Tri Nations with a Wallabies scalp, Henry noted the evolution of his own team since losing to the South Africans in Hamilton last year.

"The team's progress has been quite significant. To win at the (National/Soccer City) Stadium and at altitude is a huge achievement and very satisfying," Henry said.