

TOKYO (NOV 21) – Kirwan praises defensive effort

Japan coach John Kirwan praised his side's defensive effort following their 27-6 win over Canada on Saturday.

"Hats off to the defence," he said. "Canada had most of the possession but our guys kept defending and that's great.

"Canada played a lot better and put us under pressure at the rucks. We wanted to speed up the game and play an expansive game and they certainly shut that down."

Canada coach Kieran Crowley was full of praise for Japan.

"Japan taught us a lesson," said Crowley. "Hopefully we can learn from the experience but the trip here has been a huge learning curve."

Crowley said his side had struggled with the pressure of the Japan defensive line and with its inability to make use of the ball.

"Our execution of the things we tried to do was not what it should be," he said. "We only crossed their line once in the last minute in Sendai, while they outscored us by a pretty hefty margin. It's an area we are going to have to look pretty closely at."

Kirwan said one of the biggest differences between the team that drew 12-12 with Canada at the 2007 Rugby World Cup and the present side was their understanding of what the coaches required of them.

"The basis of the team played in the last Asian Five Nations and Pacific Nations Cup," he said. "We have brought in some young guys and the core of the team is moving forward. They understand the defensive and attacking systems and how we want to play."

The two sides are set to face each other in the 2011 World Cup, but Kirwan reminded everyone that Japan still needed to qualify.

"We haven't qualified yet and won't be taking the Asian Five Nations lightly," he said.

Kirwan said Japan needed to play more games like this.

"Our goal is to play countries ahead of us like Samoa and Scotland. We need to understand where we are at," he explained. "We need to improve as a team and control things when they get tough, like we did today."

Crowley agreed, adding: "We need games like this. We need to play countries that are close to us in the standings. This was outstanding preparation for the World Cup."