



← Greg Laidlaw is back in the No 9 jersey and set to win his 60th Scotland cap tomorrow when France come calling. The scrum-half, named as vice-captain, says Gregor Townsend's side must forget last weekend's heavy defeat in Wales as they look to get their Six Nations campaign up and running.

PICTURE CRAIG WILLIAMSON/ISN

Silverware up for grabs as teams contest new Auld Alliance Trophy

By PATRICK MCPARTLIN

Scotland and France will compete for a brand new trophy when they meet in the Six Nations at BT Murrayfield tomorrow.

The Auld Alliance Trophy, which honours the war dead from both countries' rugby communities, will be contested for the first time this weekend in the centenary year of the Armistice.

The trophy specifically commemorates the captains of Scotland and France, both of whom lost their lives in the First World War.

Eric Milroy and Marcel Burgun captained their countries in 1914, but Milroy, a machine-gunner with the Black Watch, died aged 29 during the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

Scrum-half Milroy was brought up in Edinburgh and played with Watsonians before touring South Africa with the British Lions in 1910. He was capped 12 times by Scotland including against France in 1913, with Burgun on the opposing side.

Burgun – an artillery observer and pilot – was shot down and killed in the summer of 1915.

Born in St Petersburg to a French clock-maker who worked for the Russian Tsar, Burgun turned out for Racing Club in Paris and Castres Olympiques, and played in France's maiden Championship victory against Scotland in January 1911.

He was awarded the Croix de Guerre and Palm, and had a street in Castres named in his memory. His elder brother also died in the early stages of the conflict.

The Auld Alliance Trophy will, despite the prominence



↑ Lachlan Ross, left, and Romain Cabanis will unveil the Auld Alliance Trophy to the Murrayfield crowd ahead of kick-off.

of Milroy and Burgun, be a tribute to all war dead from the rugby communities of France and Scotland.

A total of 30 Scottish internationals and 22 French were killed in the conflict, along with many other club players from both countries.

The idea for the trophy stemmed from Patrick Caublot, a member of the Amiens club in northern France, who promoted the idea with Milroy's great-great nephew David Anderson.

Anderson said: "Eric Milroy and Marcel Burgun, Scotland and France captains in 1914, are named on the trophy."

"They represent the never-forgotten sacrifices made by rugby players of both nations and embody the Auld Alliance that was renewed in the Great War."

Caublot, who headed up a party from Amiens on a visit to Scottish Rugby's war memorial yesterday, added: "The trophy underlines that the spirit of the Auld Alliance will live on."

The duo contacted the French Rugby Federation (FFR) as well as Scottish Rugby in June of last year with a view to commissioning a trophy to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War.

President of Scottish Rugby Rob Flockhart said: "The sacrifice made by so many from the rugby family in the First World War is never forgotten."

"When we received the proposal for the trophy we knew of the scale of the loss. Yet the personal story of both Milroy and Burgun made the case for the trophy totally compelling."

The trophy will be played for annually between the two countries as part of the Six Nations. It will be presented tomorrow by Flockhart and Bernard Laporte, president of the FFR, and will be unveiled to the crowd by the youngest generations of the Milroy and Burgun families – 11-year-olds Lachlan Ross and Romain Cabanis.

and space to read the game. If they are talking to Finn he can almost catch the ball and play the plays they are calling to help him out. As a collective everyone needs to step up to the plate this weekend."

Laidlaw will also bring the experience he has picked up during an, albeit injury-affected, first season at Clermont, who provide four players in the French starting team.

"The standard of French rugby is very good," said Laidlaw. "It's slightly different in that it's more attritional with slightly bigger ball carriers, and it's slightly slower."

"But Clermont players are very fit, along the same lines as UK-based players. They pride themselves on their fitness, are big boys and good players as well."

"If they can get their system right they'll be a good team and we'll need to be at our best this weekend if we want to win."

Laidlaw's absences through injury and Lions commitments last year meant the national team captaincy he



Scotland v France
NatWest Six Nations
Tomorrow, BT Murrayfield
Kick-off 3pm. Live on BBC1

- SCOTLAND**
- 15 Stuart Hogg
 - 14 Tommy Seymour
 - 13 Huw Jones
 - 12 Peter Horne
 - 11 Sean Maitland
 - 10 Finn Russell
 - 9 Greg Laidlaw
 - 1 Gordon Reid
 - 2 Stuart McInally
 - 3 Simon Berghan
 - 4 Grant Gilchrist
 - 5 Jonny Gray
 - 6 John Barclay (C)
 - 7 Hamish Watson
 - 8 Ryan Wilson

- FRANCE**
- 16 Scott Lawson
 - 17 Jamie Bhatti
 - 18 Jon Welsh
 - 19 Ben Tools
 - 20 Dave Denton
 - 21 Ali Piriou
 - 22 Chris Harris
 - 23 Blair Kinghorn

- 15 Geoffrey Pales
- 14 Teddy Thomas
- 13 Remi Lamerat
- 12 Geoffrey Doumayrou
- 11 Vrinik Vakatawa
- 10 Lionel Beauxis
- 9 Maxime Mächenaud
- 2 Guilhem Guirado (C)
- 3 Rabah Slimani
- 4 Arthur Iurria
- 5 Seb Vahaamahina
- 6 Wenceslas Laurent
- 7 Yaacoub Camara
- 8 Marco Tauleigne

- 16 Adrien Pelissie
- 17 Eddy Ben Arous
- 18 Cedate Gomes Sa
- 19 Paul Gabrillagues
- 20 Louis Picamoles
- 21 Baptiste Serin
- 22 Anthony Belleau
- 23 Benjamin Fall

captain but nothing changes because Barcs is a great captain," said Laidlaw. "He's shown that at the Scarlets and with Scotland, especially in November."

"He's got that experience and I'll slip right in to help him out. He'll deal with the forwards and overall, and I'll take care of the backs. We'll constantly be talking, we've done that all week and it'll be no different in the game."

Laidlaw forged a close bond with Cotter but is now looking ahead to playing a big part under his fellow Borderer.

"There's been a few changes. Every head coach wants to come in and put their stamp on things and Gregor's no different," he said. "He's come in and changed the way we train in terms of the week and what we're doing. He wants to play the quickest rugby in the world, so we have to train like that too."

"It just emphasises we need to get it right. The main change is the constant speed, so we need to get our skillsets absolutely correct."

had held for most of the Vern Cotter era was vacated rather than lost. John Barclay has made the role his for now, but Scotland's third-highest points scorer returns as much more than a ceremonial deputy.

"Gregor's named me as vice-

Beauxis starts at No 10 after six-year absence

FRANCE

Lionel Beauxis will start at stand-off for France against Scotland tomorrow, six years after his last cap.

The 32-year-old Beauxis was among the reinforcements called up by coach Jacques Brunel following the 15-13 loss to Ireland last weekend. He replaces Matthieu Jalibert, who injured his knee in his Test debut.

Beauxis, pictured, who has been enjoying a good season with Lyon, started his international career in 2007.

Brunel made two other changes, with Marco

Tauleigne starting in place of flanker Kevin Gourdon, and Geoffrey Doumayrou at centre instead of Henry Chavancy. However, Brunel revealed that Tauleigne was sick and he might be forced to make a last-minute change if his health does not improve.

"I don't have much to reproach the players who started last week," Brunel said.

"I've made changes either because players were injured or to create competition within the team. In principle, we had no reason to change Henry Chavancy, but I want the group to be alive."

Renowned for his kicking abilities, Beauxis has 20 Test caps but last played for France six years ago in a Six Nations defeat in Wales.

He may take the kicking duties at Murrayfield from scrum-half Maxime Mächenaud, who struck two penalties for France against Ireland.

"We believe the weather conditions won't be very good on Sunday, and we tend to think that experience will be needed in the early stages of the match," Brunel said. "Lionel can relieve us with his kicking if the pressure is strong."

