

Amlin Opta Index:

Round six European club rugby preview



Comparative analysis of player performance in the Amlin Challenge Cup and Heineken Cup, officially licensed by ERC

Amlin Opta Index team of the round*

The Amlin Opta Index goes beyond providing match statistics, using unique mathematical formulae and modelling to objectively compare player performance in both European club competitions.

Jonathan Sexton was the leading fly-half from the 5th round, with his 488 points helping him to leapfrog David Skrela to become the leading back in Europe this season. The Leinster player completed

all six of his tackles against Saracens, as well as making three offloads and kicking six of his seven attempts at goal. Ben Youngs slots into the team at scrum-half, the Leicester and England player made

56 metres on his six carries against Scarlets. Sale Sharks' James Gaskell makes the back row. The 20-year-old flanker made a team high eight tackles as well as three effective offloads.

Position	Name	Team	Competition**	Score	Av. Pos. Score
15.	Isa Nacewa	Leinster Rugby	HC	347	162
14.	Morgan Stoddart	Scarlets	HC	400	167
13.	Matthieu Bastareaud	Stade Francais	ACC	330	145
12.	Aurelien Rougerie	Clermont Auvergne	HC	337	157
11.	Paul Diggin	Northampton Saints	HC	400	145
10.	Jonathan Sexton	Leinster Rugby	HC	488	189
9.	Ben Youngs	Leicester Tigers	HC	366	176
1.	John Yapp	Cardiff Blues	HC	408	173
2.	Sean Cronin	Connacht Rugby	ACC	374	207
3.	Taufa'ao Filise	Cardiff Blues	HC	408	166
4.	Pascal Pape	Stade Francais	ACC	358	164
5.	Johann Muller	Ulster Rugby	HC	349	158
6.	James Gaskell	Sale Sharks	ACC	420	204
7.	Hendre Fourie	Leeds Carnegie	ACC	472	196
8.	Luke Watson	Bath Rugby	HC	508	238

* Based on round five matches

**ACC = Amlin Challenge Cup HC = Heineken Cup

Amlin rugby ambassador Lawrence Dallaglio said...

"Paul Diggin had a great game on the wing for Northampton against Edinburgh. He scored four tries and made a match high 101 metres to help Northampton qualify for the knockout stages. Once again, Leeds Carnegie flanker Hendre Fourie

features in the team of the round. With Lewis Moody's injury news, Martin Johnson will be happy to see Fourie on good form. Overall, he has amassed 1,426 index points (4th highest overall) and is the leading Amlin Challenge Cup player."



Amlin Opta Index player of the round: Luke Watson (Bath Rugby)



Following victory against Aironi, Bath's Luke Watson was the top performing player from round five. All index scores are calibrated to reflect

the quality of the opposition, but despite playing against a weaker side, Watson's performance was strong enough to qualify him as player of the round. In the game he scored two tries and also

made a match high 17 carries for 129 metres. In fact, in round five only two players made more carries, Sean O'Brien (Leinster) and Jordan Crane (Leicester). He also completed all eight of the tackles he attempted and didn't concede a single penalty. In attack, Watson managed to go past seven defenders, no other forward did better than this in round five. Despite appearing in just three Heineken Cup matches so far, Watson has accrued an impressive 828 points, that is a better points per game average (276) than any of his Bath

team mates and only 12 players that have played three or more games from any side can outdo this. Overall this season, the 27-year-old has made 34 carries for a gain of 210 metres as well as completing all 19 of the tackles he has attempted.

Points Breakdown	Av. Score*
Attack.....	182 142
Defence.....	324 80
Lineouts.....	2 15
Kicking.....	0 1

*Average score based on position

Round six preview

Biarritz v Bath Rugby: Bath's Matt Banahan was prolific in attack against Aironi last week, notching up four tries and making 160 metres with the ball in hand. The winger is Bath's top performing player in Europe this season, having accrued 968 points overall. The 283 metres he has made going forward is the most by any England qualified winger. The West Country side also have Nick Abendanon in their ranks who has made eight clean breaks in the tournament so far, the 2nd most by any player.

- The other crucial game in Pool 4 will see Aironi host Ulster. Ian Humphreys is the 3rd ranked back in Europe this season and the Irish side also have the 10th ranked forward and highest ranked prop in Tom Court.

Castres v Northampton Saints: Northampton have two players in the top 10 forwards this season with Phil Dowson and Tom Wood both making the cut. Wood has made 54 tackles so far and missed just two, only four players in the competition have made more. The back row forward has also won 18 lineouts with only three players beating him in this area. Dowson is Northampton's leading ball carrier, having made 54 carries so far, 15 more than any other Saints player.

Montpellier v Exeter Chiefs: Ben Moon has shone for Exeter this season, accruing 809 index points so far, more than any of his team mates. In the game against Bourgoin in the last round, the prop made 11 carries as well helping his side win 100% of their scrums and two against the head.

- Tom Johnson was a big attacking threat for Exeter in the last round, making a game high 15 carries as well as scoring a try and producing two effective offloads.
- Marc Giraud (914) and Benoit Paillaugue (913) have been Montpellier's stand out players this season. In the reverse fixture, which Montpellier won despite having three players sin-binned, Paillaugue completed all 40 passes he attempted.

Perpignan v Scarlets: Scarlets have a player in each of the top ten forwards and backs so far, with winger Sean Lamont (5th) and flanker Josh Turnbull (7th) making the grade. Morgan Stoddart made the team of round five, the Scarlets winger made a game high 86 metres as well as crossing for a try against Leicester.

- Julien Cadelon has been Perpignan's top performing player so far. The winger has made

a remarkable 441 metres with the ball in hand in just four appearances, no other player has made over 400.

- Leicester face Benetton Treviso in the other Pool 5 game. Thomas Waldrom has been the Tigers' leading player and is ranked as the 4th best forward in Europe so far this season. The back rower has made the 2nd most carries (67) in the competition as well as beating 10 defenders.

Leeds Carnegie v Bucharest Oaks: Two defeats against Stade Francais have scuppered Leeds' chances of progress in the Amlin Challenge Cup but they have still put in some impressive performances. Hendre Fourie is the 3rd ranked forward in Europe this season and the highest ranked Amlin Challenge Cup player overall. Other players to impress have been Henry Fa'afili who is the highest ranked back from the Amlin Challenge Cup and Rhys Oakley who is ranked 30th overall in the index.

- Last week Stade Francais centre Matthieu Bastareaud put in a performance against Leeds which earned him a spot in the team of the week. The French international made 10 carries for 73 metres and also completed all 11 of his tackles.

Amlin Opta Index top ten forwards of the season:

Name	Team	Score*	Av. Score**
Sean O'Brien	Leinster Rugby	1789	1084
Schalk Brits	Saracens	1489	901
Hendre Fourie	Leeds Carnegie	1427	903
Joe van Niekerk	Toulon	1390	1084
Thomas Waldrom	Leicester Tigers	1255	869
Phil Dowson	Northampton Saints	1245	869
Josh Turnbull	Scarlets	1215	903
Denis Leamy	Munster Rugby	1180	1084
Tom Wood	Northampton Saints	1158	903
Tom Court	Ulster Rugby	1156	795

*Based on cumulative scores **Average score based on position

Amlin Opta Index top ten backs of the season:

Name	Team	Score*	Av. Score**
Jonathan Sexton	Leinster Rugby	1593	902
David Skrela	Toulouse	1178	902
Ian Humphreys	Ulster Rugby	1152	902
Brad Barritt	Saracens	1142	755
Sean Lamont	Scarlets	1130	691
Dan Biggar	Ospreys	1120	902
Doug Howlett	Munster Rugby	1105	718
Ronan O'Gara	Munster Rugby	1101	902
Henry Fa'afili	Leeds Carnegie	1098	691
Dave Walder	London Wasps	1095	902

*Based on cumulative scores **Average score based on position

Heineken Cup Pool 4

Biarritz v Bath Rugby, Parc des Sports Aguilera, Saturday 22nd 13:30

Player	Score*	Av. Score**		Av. Score**	Score*	Player
Magnus Lund	938	869	Top Rated Player	718	968	Matt Banahan
Takudzwa Ngwenya	510	512	Top Rated Attacker	512	687	Matt Banahan
Magnus Lund	567	449	Top Rated Defender	379	527	Simon Taylor
Imanol Harinordoquy	269	86	Top Rated Lineout	180	260	Stuart Hooper
Eduard Coetzee	240	364	Top Rated Scrummager	366	403	Dave Wilson
Dimitri Yachvili	363	110	Top Rated Kicker	110	91	Michael Claassens

Magnus Lund has been Biarritz's leading player in Europe this season, accruing 938 index points. He has recorded 567 of those points in defence having completed all 46 of the tackles he has attempted. Only one other player (Alexandre Lapandry – Clermont

Auvergne) has made more tackles without missing one. Matt Banahan has led the way for Bath this season, he has 968 index points, however the majority of his have come in attack (687). He has made 45 carries, the 2nd most by any winger, as well

as 283 metres and five tries. Takudzwa Ngwenya has been Biarritz's leading attacking player, he is one of only seven players in the competition (four or more appearances) to have made over 10 metres per carry. He has made 23 carries and 252 metres.

Heineken Cup Pool 1

Castres v Northampton Saints, Stade Pierre Antoine, Saturday 22nd 17:45

Player	Score*	Av. Score**		Av. Score**	Score*	Player
Chris Masoe	1,024	1,084	Top Rated Player	869	1,245	Phil Dowson
Chris Masoe	535	603	Top Rated Attacker	489	746	Paul Diggin
Seremaia Bai	425	301	Top Rated Defender	449	605	Phil Dowson
Scott Murray	202	180	Top Rated Lineout	233	373	Dylan Hartley
Daniel Saayman	239	366	Top Rated Scrummager	366	563	Brian Mujati
Cameron McIntyre	293	284	Top Rated Kicker	284	599	Stephen Myler

Based on the Amlin Opta Index, Phil Dowson is the leading player who will feature in this match; he has 1,245 points with 605 of those coming in defence. The Northampton player has made 46 tackles and missed just two, he is also yet to concede a penalty

and is the only one of 38 players who have made over 36 tackles who has not conceded a penalty. Brian Mujati (563) is Northampton's leading scrummager and only the injured Adam Jones has won more index points in the scrum this season. Saints team mate

Soane Tongaihi is not far behind with 552. For Castres Chris Masoe has shone, he has 1,024 points and 535 in attack. The number eight has made 59 carries (8th most), and more metres (280) than any of the seven players to have made more carries.

Amlin Challenge Cup Pool 3

Montpellier v Exeter Chiefs, Stade Yves du Manoir, Saturday 22nd 19:45

Player	Score*	Av. Score**		Av. Score**	Score*	Player
Marc Giraud	914	1084	Top Rated Player	795	809	Ben Moon
Seta Tuilevuka	561	396	Top Rated Attacker	489	448	Matt Jess
Giorgi Chkhaidze	429	464	Top Rated Defender	177	249	Andrew Higgins
Marc Giraud	153	95	Top Rated Lineout	190	187	David Gannon
Kevin Kervarec	170	366	Top Rated Scrummager	364	471	Ben Moon
Benoit Paillaugue	344	110	Top Rated Kicker	284	111	Ryan Davis

Ben Moon is Exeter's leading player in Europe this year. Of his 809 points, 471 have come from his scrummaging efforts, making him the top performing player in this area in the Amlin Challenge Cup (6th overall). In his four games, Moon has helped Exeter

win 41 of 42 scrums on their own feed as well as five against the head. Matt Jess has led the way going forward for the Chiefs, while Andrew Higgins has been their standout defender. Higgins has made 29 tackles and conceded just one penalty in defence.

In attack, Jess has beaten nine defenders in his four full appearances. For Montpellier, number eight Marc Giraud has led the way, with 153 of his points coming in the lineout. The 24-year-old has won five of his side's throws as well as stealing five opposition throws.

Heineken Cup Pool 5

Leicester Tigers v Benetton Treviso, Welford Road, Sunday 23rd 13:00

Player	Score*	Av. Score**		Av. Score**	Score*	Player
Thomas Waldrom	1,255	869	Top Rated Player	748	858	Brendan Williams
Thomas Waldrom	931	307	Top Rated Attacker	546	723	Brendan Williams
Craig Newby	526	464	Top Rated Defender	321	294	Antonio Pavanello
George Skivington	181	190	Top Rated Lineout	190	366	Corniel van Zyl
Marcos Ayerza	414	364	Top Rated Scrummager	364	276	Ignacio F'dez-Rouyet
Toby Flood	246	284	Top Rated Kicker	284	167	Willem de Waal

Only five players in the Heineken Cup have accrued more index points than Thomas Waldrom this season, with the Leicester player notching up 1,255. Sean O'Brien (72) is the only player who has made more carries than Waldrom (67), the Tigers back rower has

also beaten 10 defenders. Benetton's leading player in Europe has been Brendan Williams. The Australian has made an impressive 327 metres with the ball in hand, the 6th most in the competition so far, and this from just three appearances. In fact only Perpignan's Julien

Candelon (110) has made more metres per game than Williams (109). Benetton also have the 4th best lineout exponent in this year's competition, Corniel van Zyl has a score of 367, having won 26 throws as well as stealing three more from the opposition.

Heineken Cup Pool 6

London Wasps v Toulouse, Adams Park, Sunday 23rd 15:00

Player	Score*	Av. Score**		Av. Score**	Score*	Player
Dave Walder	1,095	829	Top Rated Player	829	1,178	David Skrela
Joe Simpson	662	506	Top Rated Attacker	546	824	Maxime Medard
Joe Worsley	779	449	Top Rated Defender	464	400	Thierry Dusautoir
Simon Shaw	186	180	Top Rated Lineout	95	238	Shaun Sowerby
Zak Taulafo	356	364	Top Rated Scrummager	366	538	Census Johnston
Dave Walder	492	284	Top Rated Kicker	284	555	David Skrela

Joe Worsley is the leading defensive player in the Heineken Cup, he has 779 points in this facet of the game having made a remarkable 77 tackles, 20 more than any other player. Wasps' leading player overall however is Dave Walder. The fly-half has 1,095 points,

thanks to 492 from his boot, 352 in attack and 241 in defence (10 in the lineout). For Toulouse, their fly-half has also been their key man, David Skrela has 1,178 index points. Only two players have notched up more kicking index points than the French international who

is the joint top points scorer in the competition (63). In the scrum, Census Johnston has recorded 538 points (4th most). In this game he will be up against fellow Samoan, Zak Taulafo who has 356 index points in the scrum, the 18th most in the competition.