

Amlin Opta Index

Top Ten forwards of the season:

Name	Team	Score*	Av. Score**
Sean O'Brien	Leinster Rugby	2581	1310
Schalk Brits	Saracens	1720	1304
Phil Dowson	Northampton Saints	1638	1289
Joe Van Niekerk	Toulon	1638	1542
Thomas Waldrom	Leicester Tigers	1614	1289
Tom Wood	Northampton Saints	1607	1310
Hendre Fourie	Leeds Carnegie	1601	1310
Denis Leamy	Munster Rugby	1566	1542
Craig Newby	Leicester Tigers	1559	1310
Richardt Strauss	Leinster Rugby	1552	1304

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

Sean O'Brien continued his imperious form in Europe this season by helping Leinster overcome Leicester in the quarter-finals. The back-row-forward has now amassed 2,581 AOI points thanks to a competition high 98 carries for a gain of 380 metres (the most by any forward). His all-round game is exemplified by the fact that he is the leading attacking player on the index and the 3rd best defensive player. Only Joe Worsley (90), who is no longer in European action, has made more tackles than O'Brien (77) this season.

In the lineup, Dylan Hartley has been the standout player this season. The Northampton hooker has thrown 87 successful throws, 25 more than any other player, with only eight throws failing to find a team mate. This has helped Hartley achieve an Amlin Opta Index score of 603, only one other player has broken 500 in this

facet of the game, Johann Muller, who was on the losing side for Ulster in the quarter-final against Saints.

Hartley's team mates, Phil Dowson and Tom Wood, both make it into the top ten forwards of the season based on the AOI. O'Brien is the only player left in the competition to have made more carries than Dowson (74) and no player left in European action has made more tackles than Wood (77).

In the backs Jonathan Sexton has led the way. The Leinster and Ireland fly-half has 2,206 AOI points, the 2nd most of any player, with 951 of these coming through his boot. He has slotted 14 conversions and 15 penalties so far as well as crossing for three tries to give him a points total of 88 in Europe this season.

Sexton will go head to head with David Skrela in

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Top Ten backs of the season:

Name	Team	Score*	Av. Score**
Jonathan Sexton	Leinster Rugby	2206	1341
David Skrela	Toulouse	1686	1341
Ian Humphreys	Ulster Rugby	1646	1341
Doug Howlett	Munster Rugby	1612	1060
Joe Simpson	London Wasps	1577	1221
Ronan O'Gara	Munster Rugby	1568	1341
Nick Evans	Harlequins	1546	1341
Raphael Lagarde	Montpellier	1517	1341
Julien Caminati	Brive	1485	1119
Maxime Medard	Toulouse	1456	1020

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

the semi-finals, the Frenchman is currently the 2nd ranked back in Europe this season, with 781 AOI points coming thanks to his kicking. The 32-year-old has notched up 84 points in the Heineken Cup this season thanks to 12 conversions, 19 penalties and one drop-goal.

Elsewhere in the backs Doug Howlett and Ronan O'Gara both feature for Munster. Howlett has 1,338 points in attack which is the 2nd best score of any player, he has made 54 carries for a gain of 289 metres (including 102 metres v Brive in the quarter-finals), going past 16 defenders and making eight clean breaks along the way.

O'Gara is 3rd on the list of kickers this season with an AOI score of 758, he has accrued 75 points for Munster in Europe this season thanks to 18 conversions and 13 penalties, including a 17 point haul in the quarter-final victory over Brive.

Amlin rugby ambassador Lawrence Dallaglio said...

"It's crunch time in Europe with the eight remaining teams just one step away from a final at Cardiff in May. Northampton have made a dramatic return to form after a tricky period during the Six Nations and they host Perpignan in the semis. Phil Dowson and Tom Wood have been outstanding for them this season but it's the front row

that has impressed me. Dylan Hartley is the top ranked lineout exponent and Brian Mujati and Soane Tongaiha the top two scrummagers. Harlequins face a tough trip to Munster, where the battle at fly-half between two top ten ranked backs, Ronan O'Gara and Nick Evans, will be massively important."

