



AMLIN CHALLENGE CUP 2010

The inaugural Amlin Challenge Cup will see the introduction of three of the Pool runner-ups from the Heineken Cup at the quarter-finals with the winner automatically qualifying for the 2010/11 Heineken Cup – and also earning an additional Heineken Cup spot for their country.

The European season will kick-off with Amlin Challenge Cup action on Thursday evening, 8 October with the clash of Worcester Warriors and Montpellier live on Sky Sports and France 4, while Friday 9, October will see Castres Olympique welcome Toulon live on Eurosport France. A minimum of two games will be broadcast live from each of the 6 Pool weekends.

Twenty teams from England, France, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Romania – including former double Heineken Cup winners London Wasps – will contest the 2009/10 Amlin Challenge Cup in which a host of international stars will be on parade.

These include current French captain Lionel Nallet and international team-mate Sebastien Chabal with newcomers Racing-Metro 92; Springbok Johann van Niekerk at Toulon; Steve Borthwick and Justin Marshall at Saracens and Simon Shaw, Danny Cipriani and Phil Vickery at Wasps.

AMLIN CHALLENGE CUP ... SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

- European Club rugby celebrates 15 seasons in 2009/10 with the inaugural Heineken Cup played in 1995/96.
- The first European Challenge Cup tournament was played the following season in 1996/96.
- There have been 13 European Challenge Cup finals with 265 players from 17 nations the proud owners of European Challenge Cup final winners' medals.
- Three clubs – Sale Sharks, Harlequins, ASM Clermont Auvergne (as Montferrand in 1999) have won on two occasions. London Wasps are the only team to have won both the Heineken Cup and European Challenge Cup.
- There have been 972 European Challenge Cup matches played so far. The four-figure barrier will be broken when Worcester Warriors clash with Connacht Rugby at Sixways in Round 3 on Saturday, 12 December.
- The 2010 Amlin Challenge Cup winners will automatically qualify for the 2010/11 Heineken Cup – and also earn an additional place in the tournament for a club from their country.
- The ERC Ranking points available to the Amlin Challenge Cup winner has been increased from 5 to 6 points
- Three Heineken Cup teams who have finished as Pool runners-up will qualify for the knock-out stages of the Amlin Challenge Cup. The trio who finish as the third, fourth and fifth ranked Heineken Cup Pool runners-up will contest the Amlin Challenge Cup quarter-finals with the five Pool winners.

- The arrivals of Racing-Metro 92 and Olympus Rugby XV Madrid will take the number of teams who will have taken part in the tournament to 90.
- Connacht Rugby – who have been ever present and played more tournament matches than any other team – will play their 85th tournament match when they host Spanish side Olympus Rugby XV Madrid in Round 1.
- Saracens will become the ninth team to play 50 tournament matches when they launch their title challenge at home to Rugby Rovigo in Round 1 on Sunday, 11 October – and Castres Olympique will join those elite 50-match teams if they qualify for the knock-out stages.
- There have been 6,045 tries scored in those 972 matches at a match average of over six tries a game.