

Men's preview – 6 March, 2021



WORLD
RUGBY

MEN'S INTERNATIONALS – 6 MARCH, 2021

WORLD RUGBY MEN'S RANKINGS STATS

- Georgia cannot improve their ranking with victory in Portugal as their maximum gain is 0.46 rating points
- However, the Leos will drop three places to 15th with defeat against Portugal
- A Portugal win will only see them climb one place if it is in tandem with a Romania defeat against Russia and one of the margins of victory is by more than 15 points
- Portugal can only fall if they lose and Russia avoid defeat against Romania – a scenario which would see the sides swap places
- Romania cannot improve their position as they would still trail Uruguay above by 0.23 rating points even with a victory by more 15 points
- Russia will swap places with Hong Kong below if they lose at home to Romania
- The Bears will also drop below Canada and Namibia into 24th if the defeat is by more than 15 points – a position they last occupied a year ago

RUSSIA (21) 62.25 v ROMANIA (19) 65.33

Russia win by 15 points or less – Russia 63.14, Romania 64.30

Russia win by more than 15 points – Russia 63.65, Romania 63.79

Draw – Russia 62.14, Romania 65.30

Romania win by 15 points or less – Russia 61.14, Romania 66.30

Romania win by more than 15 points – Russia 60.65, Romania 66.79

PORTUGAL (20) 62.25 v GEORGIA (12) 72.18

Portugal win by 15 points or less – Portugal 63.94, Georgia 70.49

Portugal win by more than 15 points – Portugal 64.79, Georgia 69.64

Draw – Portugal 62.94, Georgia 71.49

Georgia win by 15 points or less – Portugal 61.94, Georgia 72.49

Georgia win by more than 15 points – Portugal 61.79, Georgia 72.64

The World Rugby Men's Rankings update every Monday at 12:00 GMT.

RUGBY EUROPE CHAMPIONSHIP 2021

This weekend marks the start of the Rugby World Cup 2023 qualification process. The Rugby Europe Championship across 2021 and 2022 will provide the Europe 1 and Europe 2 qualifiers for France 2023.

Click [HERE](#) for more information on the RWC 2023 qualifying process.

In the RWC 2019 qualification process a total of 188 matches were played across 994 days with 10,355 points scored by the 71 teams who began with the dream of making it to Japan.

RUSSIA v ROMANIA – FISHT OLYMPIC STADIUM, SOCHI – KO 15:00 (12:00 GMT)

Head to head

Played: 24 – Romania leads 16-7, with one draw

Points for: Russia 361 / Romania 592 (avg. score: Russia 15-24 Romania)

Highest score: Russia 33 (33-24 on 20 March, 2004) / Romania 42 (42-13 on 18 March, 2001)

Biggest winning margin: Russia 10 (22-12 on 4 November, 2007) / Romania 31 (34-3 on 8 February, 2004)

First met: 7 May, 1994 – Romania 30-0 Russia – Stadionul Parcul Copilului, Bucharest

Last met: 7 March, 2020 – Russia 32-25 Romania – Krasnodar Stadium, Krasnodar

Referee: Shota Tevzadze (Georgia)

The match will be streamed live on [Rugby Europe TV](#)

- This will be the first match in the Rugby World Cup 2023 qualification process
- The teams will contest the inaugural 'Kiseleff Cup', named after the famous war general from the 19th century, Șoseaua Kiseleff
- Russia's win last March ended a run of four successive defeats against Romania
- That defeat, a year ago, was Romania's last test match
- Russia have only won back-to-back games against Romania once, winning three in a row from 2006-08
- Romania have won eight of their last 10 meetings with Russia dating back to 2011
- Russia's only other win in this time was 16-13 in Krasnodar in February 2015
- The Oaks have won their last two meetings in Sochi, 25-0 in 2011 and 30-10 in 2017
- Fifth place in the 2020 Championship was Russia's lowest finish since 2003
- Russia have only played one previous test at the Olympic Stadium Fisht in Sochi, losing 31-12 to Spain in February 2020
- The respective head coaches are both former international flankers – Russia's Lyn Jones (Wales) and Romania's Andy Robinson (England)
- Jones has added former Scotland back-row Carl Hogg and ex-Premiership prop Boris Stankovich to his coaching team
- Robinson will now be supported by former Scotland hooker Stevie Scott, who has come on board as an assistant coach with Romania
- Veteran Oaks fly-half/centre Florin Vlaicu needs **10 points** to reach the 1,000-point milestone in test rugby
- If successful he will become the seventh player to achieve the feat after Dan Carter, Jonny Wilkinson, Neil Jenkins, Ronan O'Gara, Owen Farrell and Diego Dominguez – and the first from an emerging nation
- Vlaicu will extend his Romanian record of test appearances with his 125th cap this weekend
- Captain Mihai Macovei will draw level with Csaba Gal as fifth on Romania's all-time list with his 88th cap, and 57th as captain

- Romania have named the uncapped Paul Popoia, a winger/full-back, on the bench. The 20-year-old played for Romania at the World Rugby U20 Trophy on home soil
- Flanker Vladislav Perestiak's wife Maria played for Russia in their Rugby Europe Women's Championship 2020 loss to Spain on 20 February
- Perestiak is one of four players in the match-day squad that made their debuts against Georgia on 7 February – the others are Andrei Karzanov, German Silenko and Aleksandr Belosludtsev
- Flanker Perestiak is one of five personnel changes to the starting XV beaten by Georgia last month. Prop Valeriy Morozov, hooker Stanislav Selskii and second-row Andrey Ostrikov also come into the pack, while Budychenko gets the nod at full-back with Karzanov shifting to the right-wing and German Davydov to outside-centre
- Russia are captained by Viktor Gresev on the occasion of his 105th cap
- Yury Kushnarev will extend his Russian all-time record with his 116th appearance if he comes off the bench
- Eleven of Russia's starting line-up were part of their Rugby World Cup 2019 squad
- Three Russian players play for clubs outside of the country, prop Valeriy Morozov with Sale Sharks in England and second-row Andrey Ostrikov and centre Luc Brocas for Grenoble and Narbonne respectively in France

PORTUGAL v GEORGIA – CAR RUGBY DO JAMOR, LISBON – KO 15:00 GMT

Head to head

Played: 21 – Georgia leads 15-4, with two draws

Points for: Georgia 508 / Portugal 292 (avg. score: Georgia 24-13 Portugal)

Highest score: Portugal 34 (34-30 on 16 February, 2003) / Georgia 40 (40-0 on 11 March, 2006)

Biggest winning margin: Portugal 5 (19-14 on 14 February, 2004) / Georgia 40 (40-0 on 11 March, 2006)

First met: 19 April, 1997 – Portugal 21-17 Georgia – Estadio Universitario, Lisbon

Last met: 7 March, 2020 – Georgia 39-24 Portugal – Stade Jean Bouin, Paris, France

Referee: Gianluca Gnocchi (Italy)

The match will be streamed live on [Rugby Europe TV](#)

- This will be the side's first matches on the road to RWC 2023 in France
- Georgia qualified automatically for RWC 2019 so have not been involved in a qualification process since the European events in 2012-13
- Their last RWC qualifier was a 9-9 draw with Romania in Bucharest on 16 March, 2013
- Only three players from that match will line up for the Lelos again this weekend in hooker Jaba Bregvadze, centre Merab Sharikadze and fly-half Lasha Khmaladze
- Georgia claimed their 14th European title since 2000, and achieved their ninth 'Grand Slam' in 2020
- Portugal's only European title win was in 2003
- Georgia have won their last 15 matches in the Rugby Europe Championship – they last tasted defeat on 19 March, 2017, 8-7 to Romania in Bucharest
- Portugal scored the most points against Georgia (24) in the 2020 Championship
- Georgia scored seven tries in that 39-24 win in Paris by six different players (Mamukashvili, Gorgadze, Kacharava, Saginadze, Tapladze, Matiashvili) with a penalty try also awarded
- In Lisbon, Portugal have failed to score a try in their last three meetings with Georgia, dating back to 2010 when Joseph Gardener scored in a 16-10 defeat
- Georgia are on a 14-match unbeaten run (12 wins, two draws) against Portugal dating back to March 2006
- The Lelos have won their last eight meetings since a 20-20 draw in Tbilisi in 2009
- Their smallest margin of victory in this run is one point (13-12) in 2011
- Portugal's last victory against Georgia was 18-14 on 5 February, 2005 in Lisbon
- Three of Portugal's four victories in the head-to-head have come in Lisbon
- Only five players retain their place in the starting XV from the 16-7 win over Russia last month. Second-row Lasha Jaiani, openside Beka Saginadze and number eight Tornike Jalagonia in the pack, while captain Merab Sharikadze is selected in midfield, but at inside centre not 13, and winger Mirian Modebadze switches to the right-wing
- Prop Gia Kharashvili, back-row Irakli Tskhadadze and fly-half Giorgi Babunashvili will make their Georgia debuts if called upon from the bench
- All three have come through the Junior Lelos programme, playing in either the World Rugby U20 Trophy or U20 Championship
- By contrast, winger Sandro Todua will play his 90th test for Georgia
- Hooker Shalva Mamukashvili could win his 80th cap if called upon from the bench
- Replacement scrum-half Mikheil Alania's father Kakha was a member of the Georgian team that defeated Russia to qualify for their first Rugby World Cup in 2003
- Twelve of Georgia's starting line-up were part of their Rugby World Cup 2019 squad

- Portugal have also rung the changes and only three players retain their place in the starting XV from the 25-11 loss to Spain last month in captain Tomás Appleton, José Madeira and Rodrigo Marta
- Appleton is the only one to retain the same jersey (#12) with Madeira moving from the second-row to blindside flanker and Marta switching to the left wing.
- Dany Antunes, who scored a try and nine points in Portugal's last meeting with Georgia, returns at full-back
- Prop Geoffrey Moise's only previous test was against Georgia in 2020