

# Women's preview – 24 April, 2021



## WOMEN'S INTERNATIONALS – 24 APRIL

### WORLD RUGBY WOMEN'S RANKINGS STATS

- England will lose the number one ranking if they fail to beat France
- France must win by more than 15 points to climb above Canada into third place
- Even with that margin of victory, France would still sit 3.21 rating points behind England
- England cannot improve their rating with victory over France due to the 9.21 rating points separating the teams before home weighting is factored in for the Red Roses
- Italy cannot improve on fifth place as they would still trail a beaten France above by at least 4.83 rating points if they defeat Ireland by more than 15 points
- Italy will fall two places to seventh with defeat in Ireland, losing the two places gained with last weekend's victory over Scotland
- Ireland cannot improve on eighth place as a win by more than 15 points would still leave them trailing Italy by 0.08 rating points
- Scotland must win by more than 15 points to climb above Wales and into the top 10 for the first time – a smaller margin of victory would leave the sides separated by 0.02 points
- This scenario would see Wales drop out of the top 10 for the first time since the rankings were introduced in February 2016
- Wales will climb above Spain in ninth with victory over Scotland

### ENGLAND (1) 94.30 v FRANCE (4) 85.09

England win by 15 points or less – England 92.30, France 87.09

England win by more than 15 points – England 91.30, France 88.09

Draw – England 93.30, France 86.09

France win by 15 points or less – England 94.30, France 85.09 (No change)

France win by more than 15 points – England 94.30, France 85.09 (No change)

### IRELAND (8) 75.66 v ITALY (5) 78.77

Ireland win by 15 points or less – Ireland 76.67, Italy 77.76

Ireland win by more than 15 points – Ireland 77.18, Italy 77.26

Draw – Ireland 75.67, Italy 78.76

Italy win by 15 points or less – Ireland 74.67, Italy 79.76

Italy win by more than 15 points – Ireland 74.18, Italy 80.26

### SCOTLAND (11) 69.81 v WALES (10) 71.58

Scotland win by 15 points or less – Scotland 70.69, Wales 70.71

Scotland win by more than 15 points – Scotland 71.12, Wales 70.27

Draw – Scotland 69.69, Wales 71.71

Wales win by 15 points or less – Scotland 68.89, Wales 72.71

Wales win by more than 15 points – Scotland 68.12, Wales 73.27

*The World Rugby Women's Rankings update every Monday at 12:00 UK time.*

## **WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS 2021**

### **THIRD PLACE PLAY-OFF: IRELAND v ITALY – ENERGIA PARK, DONNYBROOK – KO 12:00 BST**

#### Head to head

Played: 18 – Ireland leads 16-2

Points for: Ireland 392 / Italy 138 (avg. score: Ireland 21-7 Italy)

Highest score: Ireland 40 (40-10 on 24 February, 2012) / Italy 29 (29-27 on 23 February, 2019)

Biggest winning margin: Ireland 39 (39-0 on 8 March, 2014) / Italy 8 (13-5 on 4 April, 1997)

First met: 4 April, 1997 – Italy 13-5 Ireland – Nice, France

Last met: 24 October, 2020 – Ireland 21-7 Italy – Energia Park, Donnybrook, Dublin

Referee: Sara Cox (England)

- Sara Cox made her test debut as a referee with the Ireland v Italy fixture in 2015, a match Ireland won 30-5 in Florence
- This is the first time since then that she has refereed this fixture
- Italy ended a run of four consecutive Women's Six Nations defeats with a 41-20 victory over Scotland last weekend
- Ireland's 56-15 loss to France last weekend was the joint fifth most points they have conceded in a test match
- Italy's defeat of Scotland was their second highest points tally against a Women's Six Nations side, beaten only by their 45-5 victory over Scotland in the 2014 Championship
- Captain Manuela Furlan scored a hat-trick in that victory from the wing, a position she hadn't started in since February 2012
- Ireland have finished third in the Women's Six Nations seven times in the last 11 years as well as winning the title twice, finishing runners-up once and fifth
- Since joining the Women's Six Nations, Italy have only finished fourth or better on five occasions, including the last three years with a record of third, second and third
- Ireland have won 16 of their last 17 meetings with Italy, the exception being a 29-27 loss to the Azzurre in Parma in February 2019
- That victory was Italy's first against Ireland since their inaugural meeting in April 1997 and ended a run of 15 consecutive losses
- Italy have not tasted victory against Ireland on Irish soil, losing all seven previous visits. The smallest margin of defeat was 11 (14-3) in 2016, the biggest 39 (39-0) in 2014
- The Azzurre have never scored more than one try in a match against Ireland on Irish soil with 10 points in a 40-10 loss in 2012 the most points they have scored
- Italy's last two tries scored on Irish soil have been by front-rows, prop Eleonora Ricci in 2018 and hooker Melissa Bettoni in 2020
- Ireland have made three changes to the starting line-up from the record loss to France
- The sole change in the pack sees Brittany Hogan earning a first test start, in the back-row alongside Dorothy Wall and captain Ciara Griffin
- Ireland Sevens regulars Stacey Flood and Ameer-Leigh Murphy Crowe also make their first test starts, at fly-half and on the right wing respectively
- London-born Grace Moore could make her Ireland debut if called upon from the bench
- Leah Lyons – one of World Rugby's Unstoppables from the 'Try and Stop Us' campaign – is selected on the bench, having last been involved against Italy in October 2020 [PROFILE >>](#)
- Italy have named an unchanged 23 from the Scotland victory with centre Michela Sillari to win her 60th cap for the Azzurre
- Only three players in Italy's starting line-up have less than 20 caps – Vittoria Ostuni Minuzzi (5), Francesca Sgorbini (7) and Erika Skofca (4)

- In comparison, only four of Ireland's starting XV have more than 20 caps – Sene Naoupu (40), Lindsay Peat (33), Clodhna Moloney (25) and Ciara Griffin (35)
- Sara Barattin will extend her Italian record by winning her 98th cap in Dublin and has more caps than the entire Ireland backline combined (84)
- Italy's starting XV is significantly more experienced than Ireland's, boasting 618 caps to 229

## FINAL: ENGLAND v FRANCE – TWICKENHAM STOOP, TWICKENHAM – KO 14:00 BST

### Head to head

Played: 47 – England leads 33-14

Points for: England 1,012 / France 573 (avg. score: England 21-12 France)

Highest score: England 57 (57-0 on 14 February, 2003) / France 30 (30-20 on 23 February, 2013)

Biggest winning margin: England 57 (57-0 on 14 February, 2003) / France 19 (19-0 on 21 April, 1999)

First met: 12 April, 1991 – RWC 1991 – England 13-0 France – Cardiff Arms Park, Wales

Last met: 21 November, 2020 – England 25-23 France – Twickenham, London

Referee: Hollie Davidson (Scotland)

- This will be Hollie Davidson's second match of the 2021 Women's Six Nations, having refereed Wales' 45-0 loss to Ireland in round two
- Davidson refereed England's 25-23 comeback victory over France in November 2020
- The winner of this match will be crowned Women's Six Nations champions for 2021
- England and France have claimed 17 of the 19 Women's Six Nations titles to date. France have won six – including the first in 2002 – and England 11. Ireland won the other two
- The Red Roses are seeking a third successive Women's Six Nations title, having claimed the Grand Slam in 2019 and 2020
- France's last Women's Six Nations title was also secured with a Grand Slam, in 2018
- The sides will meet again in a standalone match in Villeneuve d'Ascq on Friday, 30 April
- France's Caroline Boujard is the top try-scorer in the 2021 Championship with five, while England's Emily Scarratt is the top point-scorer with 34
- England were the top try-scorers in the pool stage with 17 to France's 16
- The sides have conceded only three tries between them, England one and France two
- England have won their last seven meetings with France, although only three times has the margin been greater than six points
- England snatched victory with Emily Scarratt's injury-time penalty in November, having fought back from 23-10 down in the last 15 minutes with tries by Poppy Cleall and Ellie Kildunne
- France have won only once in their last 12 meetings with England – 18-17 in March 2018
- France's last victory on English soil was 21-15 at Twickenham in March 2015
- England have won their last five meetings with France on home soil, the last two with a margin of two points
- The Red Roses beat France 10-5 in their previous meeting at The Stoop in November 2016
- France are the only European nation to have beaten England since Ireland triumphed 11-8 in February 2015
- England are looking for a 13th test victory in a row, having last tasted defeat against New Zealand (28-13) in July 2019
- England have won their last 13 Women's Six Nations matches since losing 18-17 to France in March 2018
- England have won their last 21 tests on home soil, dating back to a 25-20 loss to New Zealand at The Stoop in November 2016
- The Red Roses have won 43 of their last 47 tests, losing only to New Zealand (2016, 2017 and 2019) and France (2018) in that time
- England have made seven changes from the side that beat Italy 67-3 a fortnight ago, five in the forward pack and two in the backline
- Hooker Lark Davies and second-row Abbie Ward return having started against Scotland in round one, as did the new back-row of Zoe Aldcroft, Marlie Packer and Poppy Cleall
- The forward pack is almost the same as that Scotland match, the exception being Shaunagh Brown at tight-head prop rather than Bryony Cleall

- In the backs, Zoe Harrison comes in alongside captain Emily Scarratt in the centres for her first start of the Championship, while Sarah McKenna returns at full-back
- France have made only one personnel change with Romane Ménager rewarded for her impressive display off the bench with a start at number eight in place of Emiline Gros
- Ménager, who made her debut against England in November 2015, will start a test for the first time since February 2020
- There is also a positional switch with wingers Caroline Boujard and Cyrielle Banet swapping flanks from the Ireland victory
- Les Bleues have also made two changes to the bench with Lenaïg Corson and World Rugby Women's 15s Player of the Decade Jessy Trémoulière coming in to replace the promoted Ménager and Gabrielle Vernier, who drops out of the 23, respectively

## **FIFTH PLACE PLAY-OFF: SCOTLAND v WALES – SCOTSTOUN STADIUM, GLASGOW – KO 17:00 BST**

### Head to head

Played: 32 – Wales leads 18-14

Points for: Scotland 381 / Wales 462 (avg. score: Scotland 12-14 Wales)

Highest score: Scotland 36 (36-12 on 19 March, 2000) / Wales 41 (41-12 on 13 February, 2011)

Biggest winning margin: Scotland 28 (31-3 on 7 April, 2002) / Wales 36 (39-3 on 14 February, 2015)

First met: 19 December, 1993 – Wales 23-0 Scotland – Burnbrae, Glasgow

Last met: 17 November, 2019 – Wales 17-3 Scotland – Scotstoun Stadium, Glasgow

Referee: Clara Munarini (Italy)

- This will be Clara Munarini's first match of the Women's Six Nations 2021, having been forced to step down from round one after testing positive for COVID-19
- Munarini has never refereed this fixture before, although has refereed each team once in the Women's Six Nations. Both ended in heavy defeats against England, Wales losing 51-12 in 2019 and Scotland 53-0 in 2020
- The sides did not play in the 2020 Championship as their rearranged game in November was cancelled due to COVID-19
- Their last Women's Six Nations encounter in March 2019 also had an Italian referee in Beatrice Benvenuti
- These two sides finished bottom of their respective pools in the revised format, each conceding 15 tries in their two matches
- Only once in the last 11 Women's Six Nations have Wales or Scotland not finished bottom of the standings – Italy were the exception in 2017
- Since Italy joined the Women's Six Nations in 2007, Scotland have finished bottom eight times – seven without winning a match – with three each for Wales and Italy
- Wales have not scored a point in the 2021 Championship so far, losing 53-0 to France away and 45-0 at home to Ireland
- Scotland were beaten 52-10 by England in round one and 41-20 by Italy last weekend
- Wales have scored only seven points in their last four Women's Six Nations matches – a penalty try in a 66-7 loss to England in March 2020
- The last Welsh player to score a point in a Women's Six Nations match was Robyn Wilkins with the conversion to Siwan Lillicrap's 47th-minute try against Ireland on 9 February, 2020
- Since that last try by a Welsh player, Wales have conceded 35 tries with only a penalty try in reply – averaging eight tries against them in their last four matches
- Wales' last win away from home was 17-3 against Scotland in at Scotstoun Stadium in November 2019
- Scotland have lost 10 and drawn one of their last 11 Women's Six Nations matches, dating back to a 15-12 win over Ireland in Dublin on 11 March, 2018
- Scotland's last test victory came on 19 January, 2020, 36-12 away against Spain – since then they have lost four and drawn one
- Scotland will become the fourth team to play 100 Women's Six Nations matches after England, France and Wales
- Wales have won on their last two visits to Scotland, 17-15 in the Women's Six Nations in 2019 and 17-3 in November of that year – both times at Scotstoun Stadium
- Wales have won all five previous meetings between the sides played in Glasgow (23-0 in 1993, 41-12 in 2011, 13-0 in 2013, 17-15 and 17-3 in 2019)
- Wales are seeking a fourth successive victory over Scotland, dating back to a 15-14 win for Scotland in Cumbernauld in February 2017
- Three of the four previous meetings between the sides have been decided by two points or less, Wales winning 17-15 and 18-17 and Scotland winning 15-14

- That Scotland victory ended a run of 12 successive wins for Wales, matching the Scots' winning run from 1997-2005
- Scotland have made five changes, two of them positional, from the loss to Italy
- Prop Christine Belisle is the only change to the forward pack, starting her second game of the Championship
- The return of Hannah Smith from a GB Sevens training camp sees Lisa Thomson revert back to inside centre and captain Helen Nelson to fly-half
- The other change sees Jenny Maxwell start her first match of the year at scrum-half
- Wales have made nine personnel and four positional changes from their last outing with Hannah Jones taking over the captaincy as Siwan Lillicrap is ruled out with an ankle injury
- Only second-row Natalia John and winger Lisa Neumann wear the same jerseys
- Caryl Thomas, Robyn Lock and Donna Rose form a new front-row with Teleri Wyn Davies starting alongside John in the second-row
- Manon Johnes switches to openside with Georgia Evans moving to number eight and Bethan Dainton coming in on the blindside
- Megan Davies will start for the first time at scrum-half with the experienced Robyn Wilkins alongside her after switching from full-back to her favoured position of fly-half
- Hannah Jones moves to inside centre with Gemma Rowlands filling the vacated #13 jersey
- Jasmine Joyce returns from the GB Sevens training camp to start at full-back for the first time with Caitlin Lewis selected on the left wing
- Robyn Lock's only previous test start was against Scotland as a flanker in November 2019
- Shona Powell-Hughes and Jade Knight have been named on the bench, having last played for Wales at Rugby World Cup 2017 and in March 2018 respectively