

**Men's preview – 12-  
13 February, 2022**



**WORLD  
RUGBY**

## WORLD RUGBY RANKINGS EXPLAINER

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The men's and women's World Rugby Rankings powered by Capgemini are calculated using a points exchange system, in which sides take points off each other based on the match result. Whatever one side gains, the other loses.

The exchanges are based on the match result, the relative strength of each team and the margin of victory (15 points or less / more than 15 points), and there is an allowance for home advantage.

Any match that is not a full international between two World Rugby full member unions does not count towards the rankings, e.g. the British and Irish Lions test against Japan.

For more on the World Rugby Rankings, visit [www.world.rugby/rankings](http://www.world.rugby/rankings).

### STATS ON WORLD RUGBY MEN'S RANKINGS POWERED BY CAPGEMINI

- Wales must beat Scotland by more than 15 points to be the higher ranked of the two nations and then only by 0.01 of a rating point
- Scotland will slip back to seventh below Australia if they lose by a smaller margin
- Scotland will climb above a beaten France into fifth – equalling their highest ever ranking – if they are victorious against Wales, a result which would see the Welsh drop one to ninth
- Les Bleus will be ranked higher than Ireland if they win their encounter in Paris and would climb another place to third if England also fail to beat Italy
- A heavy defeat for Les Bleus could see them drop as low as seventh if in tandem with a Scottish win
- Ireland cannot improve on third place but could cut New Zealand's advantage over them to just 0.16 rating points with a win by more than 15 points
- England cannot improve their rating with victory over Italy due to the 16.15 rating points between the sides before home weighting is factored in
- Italy must beat England by more than 15 points to climb above a Georgia side victorious in the Netherlands. If Georgia fail to win then a smaller margin of victory is enough for Italy
- Georgia cannot improve their rating with victory over the Netherlands due to the 15.90 rating points between the sides before home weighting is factored in
- The Netherlands must win by more than 15 points to improve their position if Russia win. However, if the Bears lose then a smaller margin of victory will be sufficient
- Romania cannot improve their position even with an emphatic victory over their visitors and will drop below Tonga if they fail to beat Portugal
- Portugal will fall two places if beaten by Romania, three if in tandem with a Spanish victory over Russia
- Portugal will climb to a new high of 15th if they beat Romania and will be the higher ranked of the two nations for the first time since November 2005
- Romania can fall between three to five places, depending on the margin of defeat and the outcome of the Russia v Spain match
- Russia will climb two places – above Chile and Namibia – if they beat the higher-ranked Spain in Sochi
- Spain can climb two or three places in victory with Russia remaining 25th unless the Dutch can upset Georgia

## **SIX NATIONS 2022**

### **FRANCE (5) 85.53 v IRELAND (3) 86.83**

France win by 15 points or less – France 86.36, Ireland 86.00  
France win by more than 15 points – France 86.77, Ireland 85.59  
Draw – France 85.36, Ireland 87.00  
Ireland win by 15 points or less – France 84.36, Ireland 88.00  
Ireland win by more than 15 points – France 83.77, Ireland 88.59

### **WALES (8) 81.26 v SCOTLAND (7) 84.23**

Wales win by 15 points or less – Wales 82.25, Scotland 83.23  
Wales win by more than 15 points – Wales 82.75, Scotland 82.74  
Draw – Wales 81.25, Scotland 84.23  
Scotland win by 15 points or less – Wales 80.25, Scotland 85.23  
Scotland win by more than 15 points – Wales 79.75, Scotland 85.74

### **ITALY (14) 70.51 v ENGLAND (4) 86.66**

Italy win by 15 points or less – Italy 72.51, England 84.66  
Italy win by more than 15 points – Italy 73.51, England 83.66  
Draw – Italy 71.51, England 85.66  
England win by 15 points or less – Italy 70.51, England 86.66 (No change)  
England win by more than 15 points – Italy 70.51, England 86.66 (No change)

## **RUGBY EUROPE CHAMPIONSHIP 2022**

### **RUSSIA (25) 58.60 v SPAIN (20) 66.20**

Russia win by 15 points or less – Russia 60.06, Spain 64.74  
Russia win by more than 15 points – Russia 60.79, Spain 66.20  
Draw – Russia 59.06, Spain 65.74  
Spain win by 15 points or less – Russia 58.06, Spain 66.74  
Spain win by more than 15 points – Russia 57.79, Spain 67.01

### **NETHERLANDS (26) 56.82 v GEORGIA (13) 72.72**

Netherlands win by 15 points or less – Netherlands 58.82, Georgia 70.72  
Netherlands win by more than 15 points – Netherlands 59.82, Georgia 69.72  
Draw – Netherlands 57.82, Georgia 71.72  
Georgia win by 15 points or less – Netherlands 56.82, Georgia 72.72 (No change)  
Georgia win by more than 15 points – Netherlands 56.82, Georgia 72.72 (No change)

### **ROMANIA (15) 67.91 v PORTUGAL (17) 66.84**

Romania win by 15 points or less – Romania 68.50, Portugal 66.24  
Romania win by more than 15 points – Romania 68.80, Portugal 65.95  
Draw – Romania 67.50, Portugal 67.24  
Portugal win by 15 points or less – Romania 66.50, Portugal 68.24  
Portugal win by more than 15 points – Romania 65.80, Portugal 68.95

## **SIX NATIONS 2022 – SATURDAY, 12 FEBRUARY**

### **WALES v SCOTLAND – PRINCIPALITY STADIUM, CARDIFF – KO 14:15 GMT**

#### Head-to-head

Played: 127 – Wales leads 73-51 with three draws

Points for: Wales 1,732 / Scotland 1,329 (avg. score 13-10)

Highest score: Wales 51 (51-3 on 15 March, 2014) / Scotland 35 (35-10 on 2 February, 1924)

Biggest winning margin: Wales 48 (51-3 on 15 March, 2014) / Scotland 25 (35-10 on 2 February, 1924)

First met: 8 January, 1883 – Scotland 0-0 Wales\* – Raeburn Place, Edinburgh

Last met: 13 February, 2021 – Wales 25-24 Scotland – Murrayfield, Edinburgh

\* Wales won by three goals to one

Referee: Nic Berry (Australia)

Debut: 11 November, 2016 - Hong Kong 51-5 Papua New Guinea

Tests as referee: 21

Six Nations debut: 23 February, 2019 – France 27-10 Scotland

Six Nations tests as referee: 2

- Referee Nic Berry takes charge of his first Six Nations match since March 2019
- He has refereed Scotland on three occasions, including his Six Nations debut in 2019. He last took charge of Scotland in their 60-14 defeat of Tonga last November
- Berry has refereed Wales twice, both against Pacific island nations (Tonga in 2018 and Fiji in 2021)
- Berry was named Referee of the Year in the Rugby Australia Awards last week
- Scotland retained the Calcutta Cup for the first time since 1983-84 after a 20-17 defeat of England in round one, while Wales were beaten 29-7 by Ireland in Dublin
- Scotland have never won their first two matches of a Championship in the Six Nations era
- Scotland won on their last visit to Wales, triumphing 14-10 in Llanelli in October 2020
- This was their first win on Welsh soil since 2002 and also their first Six Nations away win outside of Rome since 2010
- Scotland have lost on their last 10 visits to the Welsh capital dating back to a 27-22 victory on 6 April, 2002
- Wales need two tries to bring up 250 in the Six Nations
- Wales need two tries to reach 250 in tests against Scotland (190)
- Wales were the top try-scorers in the 2021 Championship with 20, two more than Scotland who recorded their best return in a Championship and 11 more than their 2020 tally
- Wales did not lose to Scotland when Warren Gatland was in charge, their one defeat in 2017 coming when he was on sabbatical with the British and Irish Lions
- Wales failed to score a point in the first half of a match since their 25-22 defeat to England in March 2016 – 71 matches ago
- Wales made the most tackles in round one (191)
- Wales gave away the joint-highest number of penalties in round one alongside France (14)
- Wales lost a third of their lineouts against Ireland in round one (four from 12)
- Scotland had the only 100 per cent lineout success rate on their own throw (16/16)
- Wales coach Wayne Pivac has made four personnel and one positional change to his starting line-up for this match
- The tight-five remains unchanged but Taine Basham switches to blindside with Jac Morgan filling the vacated spot to make his test debut
- Ross Moriarty, fresh from his 50th cap off the bench, replaces Aaron Wainwright at number eight
- Owen Watkin will start at outside centre in place of Josh Adams, who has a calf injury

- The other change sees Alex Cuthbert selected on the right wing for his first Six Nations outing since a 21-16 win over England on 11 February, 2017
- Dan Biggar captains Wales for the first time at home and will play his 100th test (96 Wales, three Lions)
- Replacement Jonathan Davies could join Biggar on the milestone if called upon (93 Wales, six Lions)
- Biggar and Davies would be the 11th and 12th World Rugby U20 Championship graduates to reach a century of tests and second and third Welsh players after Leigh Halfpenny (96 Wales, four Lions)
- Prop Wyn Jones wins his 40th cap for Wales
- Scotland coach Gregor Townsend has made five changes to his starting line-up, including an all-new front row
- Pierre Schoeman, Stuart McNally and WP Nel are all promoted from the bench to start in Cardiff
- Vice-captain Grant Gilchrist will win his 50th Scotland cap, having made his debut in the Welsh capital in 2012
- Sam Skinner starts in place of the injury Jamie Ritchie, who will miss the remainder of the Six Nations after undergoing surgery on the hamstring injury he suffered against England
- The only change in the backline sees Sione Tuipulotu step off the bench to partner Chris Harris in the centre
- Captain Stuart Hogg will play his 90th test, the fourth player to reach the milestone for Scotland, with fly-half Finn Russell making his 60th appearance for his country
- Replacement flanker Rory Darge is set for his Scotland debut off the bench
- Cameron Redpath is named on the bench for the first time since his debut, against England in the 2021 Championship opener
- There are a total of 532 caps in the Wales starting line-up, split 226 in the forwards and 306 in the backs
- This compares to 553 for Scotland, split 287 in the forwards and 266 in the backs

## FRANCE v IRELAND – STADE DE FRANCE, SAINT DENIS – KO 17:45 (16:45 GMT)

### Head-to-head

Played: 100 – France leads 58-35 with seven draws

Points for: France 1,613 / Ireland 1,217 (avg. score: 16-12)

Highest score: France 45 (45-10 on 17 February, 1996) / Ireland 31 (43-31 on 11 February, 2016)

Biggest winning margin: France 39 (44-5 on 6 April, 2002) / Ireland 24 (24-0 on 24 March, 1913)

First met: 20 March, 1909 – Ireland 19-8 France – Lansdowne Road, Dublin

Last met: 14 February, 2021 – France 15-13 Ireland – Aviva Stadium, Dublin

Referee: Angus Gardner (Australia)

Debut: 29 November, 2011 - Papua New Guinea 78-3 Vanuatu

Tests as referee: 31

Six Nations debut: 12 March, 2016 – Ireland 58-15 Italy

Six Nations tests as referee: 4

- Referee Angus Gardner takes charge of his first Six Nations match since Wales' 25-7 defeat of Ireland in March 2019
- All four of Gardner's previous Six Nations matches have involved either France or Ireland
- Gardner has refereed France on five occasions, but they have only won once – against Argentina in the Rugby World Cup 2019 pool stage
- He has also refereed Ireland five times, the most recent their RWC 2019 loss to Japan
- Gardner made his Six Nations debut in only his sixth test, but there was a four-and-a-half-year gap between his debut (PNG v VAN) and the 2016 encounter in Dublin
- France sit top of the Six Nations standings after round one on points difference from Ireland. Les Bleus beat Italy 37-10 while Ireland beat defending champions Wales 29-7
- France were the last team to beat Ireland – 15-13 in the 2021 Championship, the 100th meeting between the sides
- That defeat saw Ireland lose their opening two matches for the first time in the Six Nations era
- Ireland have won their last nine matches overall and four in a row in the Six Nations
- Ireland have won five of their last eight Six Nations encounters with France
- France won their last meeting on French soil – 35-27 in October 2020 thanks to tries from Antoine Dupont, Romain Ntamack and Virimi Vakatawa and a penalty try
- Ntamack scored 18 of France's points in that victory with Ireland's tries coming from Cian Healy, Robbie Henshaw and Jacob Stockdale
- Ireland's last win on French soil was a 15-13 triumph at this venue in February 2018
- Ireland have a record of W2, L2, D1 for their last five visits to France
- Last weekend Gabin Villiere became the first French player to score a Six Nations hat-trick since Vincent Clerc's treble against Ireland in 2008
- Ireland's Mack Hansen was named Guinness Six Nations Player of the Round after an impressive debut against Wales. He carried the ball more metres than any other player in round one (152 metres)
- Johnny Sexton became the third player to score 500 points in the Six Nations in the win against Wales, joining Owen Farrell and Ronan O'Gara in achieving the feat
- Sexton's nine points took him to 505 Championship points, ahead of Farrell (500) and 52 behind his countryman and all-time top points-scorer O'Gara (557)
- France number eight Grégory Alldritt made a round one best 21 carries
- Ireland have gone six consecutive matches without conceding a yellow card, dating back to the win over England in last year's Championship
- France conceded the joint-highest number of penalties (14) alongside Wales in round one
- France coach Fabien Galthié has made two personnel and one positional change to his starting line-up from the win over Italy

- François Cros returns on the blindside with Anthony Jelonch shifting across to openside
- The other change sees Yoram Moefana replace the injured Jonathan Danty alongside Gaël Fickou in the centre
- Dylan Cretin drops to the bench with Thibaud Flament filling the spot vacated by Moefana as France opt for a 6-2 split
- Ireland coach Andy Farrell has made only one enforced change to his starting line-up after captain Johnny Sexton injured a hamstring in training on Wednesday
- Joey Carbery steps in at fly-half with Jack Carty taking up a place on the bench, having won the last of his 10 caps against Russia at Rugby World Cup 2019
- Second-row James Ryan takes over the captaincy in Sexton's absence, having been on the winning side in four of his previous five outings as captain
- There are two further changes to the bench with second-row Iain Henderson and centre Robbie Henshaw getting the nod in place of Ryan Baird and James Hume
- There are 365 caps in the French starting line-up, split 183 in the forwards and 182 in the backs
- This compares to 409 for Ireland, split 250 in the forwards and 159 in the backs

## **SIX NATIONS 2022 – SUNDAY, 13 FEBRUARY**

### **ITALY v ENGLAND – STADIO OLIMPICO, ROME – KO 16:00 (15:00 GMT)**

#### Head-to-head

Played: 28\* – England leads 28-0

Points for: Italy 342 / England 1,133 (avg. score: 12-40)

Highest score: Italy 23 (80-23 on 17 February, 2001) / England 80 (80-23 on 17 February, 2001)

Biggest winning margin: England 60 (67-7 on 2 October, 1999)

\* Capped matches for both teams

First met: 10 May, 1986 – Italy 15-15 England – Stadio Olimpico, Rome (non-cap for England)

Last met: 13 February, 2021 – England 41-18 Italy – Twickenham Stadium, London

Referee: Damon Murphy (Australia)

Debut: 07 July, 2018 - Hong Kong 51-0 Cook Islands (RWCQ)

Tests as referee: 4

Six Nations debut: N/A

- Referee Damon Murphy will make his Six Nations debut in Rome this weekend
- It will be the first time he referees England or Italy
- Former Australian sevens player Murphy refereed the men's gold medal match between Fiji and New Zealand at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games last July
- Both sides tasted defeat away from home in round one, England 20-17 to Scotland and Italy 37-10 to France
- England have lost their opening match for the third Six Nations in a row
- Italy have lost their last 33 Six Nations matches, dating back to a 22-19 defeat of Scotland at Murrayfield on 28 February, 2015
- In this run, Italy have scored 51 tries and 429 points but conceded 178 tries and 1,339 points
- In total, Italy have won just 12 and drawn one of their 111 Six Nations matches, losing 98
- Italy have finished bottom of the Championship for six years in a row and seven times in eight years with Scotland the exception in 2015
- Italy have lost their last 20 home matches in the Six Nations dating back to a 22-15 win against Ireland on 16 March, 2013
- England are the only team Italy are yet to beat in the Six Nations. Seven of Italy's 12 Six Nations victories have come against Scotland with the others against France (2), Ireland (2) and Wales (1)
- The closest the Azzurri have come to victory in 28 tests with England are four-point losses in 2008 and 2012 (they did draw 15-15 in 1986 but that was a non-cap match for England)
- England's average winning margin in their last four visits to Rome is 33 points. In the three fixtures before that it was just four points
- Italy conceded a record 239 points and 34 tries in the 2021 Six Nations
- Italy scored only six tries in the 2021 Championship and only have only reached double figures for tries scored on two occasions, 12 being their record in 2003 and 2018
- Italy ended a run of 16 consecutive test defeats with a 17-10 victory against Uruguay in their final Autumn Nations Series match. Their previous win was against Canada at RWC 2019
- Italy have never scored more than three tries in a match with England
- England have kicked two drop goals against Italy – one by flanker Neil Back in 2000
- Luca Morisi is the only Italy player to score two tries in a game against England (in 2015)
- Ben Youngs will face Italy for the 12th time this weekend – a record for an England player – if he comes on
- With his try against France, debutant Tommaso Menoncello became the youngest try-scorer in the Six Nations era at 19 years and 170 days

- Menoncello is also the youngest try-scorer for 55 years in the history of the Championship, since Keith Jarrett scored for Wales against England in 1967
- England fly-half Marcus Smith is the top point scorer after round one with 17
- Italy's captain Michele Lamaro made the joint-most tackles (20) alongside Wales' Taine Basham in round one
- Italy coach Kieran Crowley has made three changes to his starting line-up
- Tight-head Pietro Ceccarelli will make his first start for Italy in what is his 18th test
- The other change in the forwards sees Braam Steyn replace Sebastian Negri for his first Six Nations start since 2020
- In the backline, Federico Mori comes onto the right wing in place of Menoncello
- Three places come onto the bench in prop Cherif Traore', David Sisi and scrum-half Alessandro Fusco
- England coach Eddie Jones has made six personnel and two positional changes to his starting line-up for the trip to Rome
- Hooker Jamie George and tight-head Will Stuart are promoted from the bench into the front row alongside Ellie Genge
- Maro Itoje shifts to the blindside in place of the injured Lewis Ludlam with Charlie Ewels to partner Nick Isiekwe in the second row
- Alex Dombrandt is the final change in the pack, coming in at number eight
- Harry Randall will start at scrum-half having been an unused replacement against Scotland
- Jack Nowell comes onto the left wing for his first test start since the 38-38 draw against Scotland in March 2019 with Joe Marchant shifting to outside centre
- Replacement Ollie Chessum could make his debut if called upon from the bench
- By contrast scrum-half Ben Youngs could join prop Jason Leonard as the most-capped England men's player with his 114th cap for his country off the bench
- There are a total of 235 caps in the Italian starting line-up, split 142 in the forwards and 93 in the backs. Full-back Edoardo Padovani and flanker Braam Steyn contribute a third of Italy's total of 235
- This compares to 337 caps in England's starting line-up, split 235 in the forwards and 112 caps in the backs. England's starting backline has less caps between them than Ben Youngs

## **RUGBY EUROPE CHAMPIONSHIP 2022 – SATURDAY, 12 FEBRUARY**

### **RUSSIA v SPAIN – FGUP YUG-SPORT, SOCHI – KO 13:00 (10:00 GMT)**

#### Head-to-head

Played: 24 – Russia leads 16-8

Points for: Russia 651 / Spain 567 (avg. score 27-23)

Highest score: Russia 52 (52-19 on 16 February, 2003) / Spain 52 (52-6 on 14 April, 1996)

Biggest winning margin: Russia 33 (36-3 on 27 October, 2002 and 52-19 on 16 February, 2003) / Spain 46 (52-6 on 14 April, 1996)

First met: 10 April, 1994 – Russia 16-9 Spain – Ciudad Universitaria, Madrid

Last met: 14 November, 2021 – Spain 49-12 Russia – Estadio Nacional Universidad Complutense, Madrid

Referee: Andrea Piardi (Italy)

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

- This will be the second time that Andrea Piardi has refereed this fixture, having overseen Spain's 31-12 victory over Russia in Sochi in 2020
- Spain are unbeaten in the two matches they have had Piardi as referee, while Russia have lost both matches with the Italian in the middle
- The Rugby Europe Championship 2021 and 2022 will determine the Europe 1 and Europe 2 qualifiers for France 2023. The third-ranked team will enter the Final Qualification Tournament alongside a side from Africa, the Americas and Asia/Pacific
- Georgia lead the race to France 2023 with 26 points, eight more than Romania with Spain (17) and Portugal (16) still firmly in contention
- Russia lie fifth on nine points with the Netherlands are yet to record a point on their return to the top tier of Rugby Europe competition after losing all six matches
- Russia appeared at their second tournament in 2019 having made their Rugby World Cup debut in 2011
- Russia came into the 2022 Championship with a new coaching team with Lyn Jones departing as head coach and Dick Muir appointed as his successor
- A former Springbok assistant coach, Muir is also a former Sharks head coach, having held the reins at the franchise from 2005-07
- Spain have won their last five meetings with Russia, dating back to a 22-20 loss in the Rugby Europe Championship in Sochi in February 2016
- The closest margin in this run has been two points (16-14 in 2019) and the largest 37 points (49-12 in 2021)
- Spain scored seven tries in their last meeting with Russia in November, equalling their record in a match with the Bears, set in 1996 and matched in 2015
- Before their current run of two wins on Russia soil, Spain had lost on their last six visits
- Russia coach Muir has made six personnel and two positional changes to his starting line-up
- Hooker Dmitrii Parkhomenko, a try-scorer off the bench on debut in Romania, earns him a first test start with Vladimir Podrezov also coming into the front row
- Maksim Gargalyk shifts across the second row with Anton Makarenko earning a first test start with both having made their debuts last weekend
- Viktor Arkhip moves to the blindside to make space for returning captain Viktor Gresev to win his 107th test cap
- There are only two changes in the backline with scrum-half Efim Riabischuk earning a first test start and experienced centre Kirill Golosnitskiy coming in after joining the squad this week

- Carcassonne prop Nikoloz Narmania could make his debut off the bench, becoming the ninth player to win a first cap for the Bears this year
- Prop Evgeny Misheckhin, back-row Vitaly Zhivatov and centre Dmitry Gerasimov line-up on the bench after linking up with the squad this week
- Scrum-half Alexey Shcherban is in line for his 50th cap off the bench
- Spain coach Santiago Santos is boosted by the return of some France-based players with second-row Lucas Guillaume, openside Fred Quercy and full-back Charlie Malie coming into the side that convincingly beat the Netherlands last weekend
- Malie's selection at full-back means Gauthier Minguillon shifts to the left wing

## **NETHERLANDS v GEORGIA – NATIONAL RUGBY CENTRE STADIUM, AMSTERDAM – KO 13:15 (12:15 GMT)**

### Head-to-head

Played: 5 – Georgia leads 4-1

Points for: Netherlands 79 / Georgia 212 (avg. score: 15-42)

Highest score: Netherlands 55 (55-3 on 24 November, 1995) / Georgia 88 (88-0 on 3 February, 2002)

Biggest winning margin: Netherlands 52 (55-3 on 24 November, 1995) / Georgia 88 (88-0 on 3 February, 2002)

First met: 24 November, 1995 – Netherlands 55-3 Georgia – Castricum, Netherlands

Last met: 26 June, 2021 – Georgia 48-15 Netherlands – Kavkasioni Arena, Telavi

Referee: Ludovic Cayre (France)

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

- Referee Ludovic Cayre acted as an assistant to Romain Poite in Georgia's draw with Portugal last weekend
- He has refereed one Rugby Europe Championship match in each of the last four years
- The Rugby Europe Championship 2021 and 2022 will determine the Europe 1 and Europe 2 qualifiers for France 2023. The third-ranked team will enter the Final Qualification Tournament alongside a side from Africa, the Americas and Asia/Pacific
- Georgia lead the race to France 2023 with 26 points, eight more than Romania with Spain (17) and Portugal (16) still firmly in contention
- Russia lie fifth on nine points with the Netherlands yet to record a point on their return to the top tier of Rugby Europe competition after losing all six matches
- Georgia have won every title to date since the competition was renamed the Rugby Europe Championship in 2017
- Georgia's 20-match winning run in the Rugby Europe Championship came to an end last weekend following the 25-25 draw with Portugal in Tbilisi
- Georgia's last defeat in the Championship came on 19 March, 2017, losing 8-7 to Romania in Bucharest
- The Netherlands won their first meeting with Georgia 55-3 on home soil in November 1995 but have scored only 24 points in four matches since
- Georgia won their last meeting on Dutch soil, 32-3 in February 2001
- This was the only time Georgia have failed to score 40 points in their four victories
- Georgia triumphed 48-15 when the sides last met in June, the Netherlands' first match back in the top tier of Rugby Europe competition for 19 years
- Teenager Davit Niniashvili scored a hat-trick in that win with Akaki Tabutsadze (2), Vasil Lobzhanidze, Guram Gogichashvili and Gia Kharashvili also dotting down
- Jordy Hop and Wolf van Dijk scored tries for the Netherlands in defeat
- Netherlands coach Zane Gardiner has made four personnel and one positional change to his starting line-up from the loss to Spain, all of them in the forwards
- Hooker Mark Darlington comes in, joining his brother Andrew and Hugo Langelaan in the front row
- Dennis van Dijken and Jim Boelrijk form a new second-row pairing with Louis Bruinsma dropping back to blindside
- Liam Stone will make his test debut on the openside with captain Dirk Danen completing the back row
- It will be a 48th and final cap for Danen, who has captained his country for the last six years but is now retiring
- There are two more uncapped players on the bench in Spike Salman and Jules Godfroy

- Georgia coach Levan Maisashvili has made seven personnel changes to his starting line-up, five of them in the forward pack
- Mikheil Nariashvili, Shalva Mamukashvili and Luka Japaridze form a new front row while Nodar Cheishvili joins Lasha Jaiani in the second row
- The other change sees Giorgi Tsutskiridze start on the openside
- In the backline, scrum-half Vasil Lobzhanidze is promoted from the bench and Davit Meskhi earns a first start on the left wing after making his test debut against Portugal
- Seven of the starting line up play for Black Lion, Georgia's franchise in the Rugby Europe Super Cup with seven based in France and one in Russia
- Replacement Tornike Kakhoizdze could make his debut, the centre having played for Georgia in the U20 International Series in South Africa last July

## ROMANIA v PORTUGAL – STADIONUL NATIONAL ARCUL DE TRIUMF, BUCHAREST – KO 17:30 (15:30 GMT)

### Head-to-head

Played: 26 – Romania leads 22-4

Points for: Romania 797 / Portugal 282 (avg. score: 30-10)

Highest score: Romania 92 (92-0 on 13 April, 1996) / Portugal 27 (27-28 on 13 March, 2021)

Biggest winning margin: Portugal 11 (22-11 on 8 February, 2020) / Romania 92 (92-0 on 13 April, 1996)

First met: 28 May, 1967 – Romania 6-46 Portugal – Stadium Tapadinho, Lisbon

Last met: 13 March, 2021 – Romania 28-27 Portugal – CAR Rugby do Jamor, Lisbon

Referee: Frank Murphy (Ireland)

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

- Referee Frank Murphy takes charge of his first Rugby Europe Championship match since Spain's 20-13 win over Russia in 2018
- Murphy will referee Romania for the first time, but has taken charge of Portugal on three occasions, the most recent their historic 20-17 win over Canada last November
- That was Portugal's first win with Murphy as the referee, having lost to Germany in 2016 and Belgium in 2017
- The Rugby Europe Championship 2021 and 2022 will determine the Europe 1 and Europe 2 qualifiers for France 2023. The third-ranked team will enter the Final Qualification Tournament alongside a side from Africa, the Americas and Asia/Pacific
- Georgia lead the race to France 2023 with 26 points, eight more than Romania with Spain (17) and Portugal (16) still firmly in contention
- Russia lie fifth on nine points with the Netherlands yet to record a point on their return to the top tier of Rugby Europe competition after losing all six matches
- This match could be pivotal in the race to secure one of the direct qualifiers for RWC 2023
- Portugal have played in one Rugby World Cup – in 2007 in France – while Romania failed to qualify for a tournament for the first time in 2019
- Andy Robinson has a W8, L6 record in charge of Romania
- Romania have won their last four test matches (29-14 v Uruguay, 56-15 v Netherlands, 32-20 v Tonga and 34-25 v Russia)
- In their last meeting in March 2021, Florin Vlaicu became first player outside a Six Nations or Rugby Championship union to reach 1,000 test points
- He became the seventh player to achieve the feat after Dan Carter, Jonny Wilkinson, Neil Jenkins, Ronan O'Gara, Owen Farrell and Diego Dominguez
- Portugal led 27-14 going into the last 10 minutes but tries from Nicholas Onutu and Ovidiu Cojocaru saw Romania fight back with Ionel Melinte's 80th minute conversion snatching victory for the Oaks
- The 22-11 victory in 2020 was Portugal's biggest winning margin, bettering their seven-point victory in 2011
- Twenty-six years ago Romania enjoyed a record victory against Portugal, winning 92-0 in Bucharest – a match that saw winger Ionel Rotaru score five of the Oaks' 13 tries
- Portugal are yet to win in Romania, having recorded all four of their victories in Lisbon
- Romania coach Andy Robinson has made two personnel and one positional change to his starting line-up, both in the backline
- Daniel Plai will start at fly-half with Tudor Boldor out injured
- Ionel Melinte comes in at full-back with Marius Simonescu shifting to the left wing and Nicolas Onutu dropping to the bench

- There are two other changes on the bench with prop Alexandru Savin and scrum-half Florin Surugiu coming in
- Portugal coach Patrice Lagisquet has made only one change with Jorge Abecassis named at fly-half for this must-win match
- There are two changes to the bench in prop Cody Thomas – who will make his test debut if called upon – and back Pedro Bettencourt