



Heineken® Cup Newswire

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ELEVEN KNOCK-OUT PLACES ON THE LINE

The final round of Heineken Cup Pool matches always stir the blood, but there will be even more at stake as the 2009 /10 tournament moves towards the end of Act 1 over the next few weeks.

The final two rounds of Pool matches – including London Irish's Round 6 clash with defending champions Leinster that will now be played at Twickenham Stadium on 23 January – will not only settle which eight teams will qualify for quarter-final action in April, but also determine which three sides join the five Amlin Challenge Cup Pool winners in the last-eight of that competition.

As usual, the six Heineken Cup Pool winners and the best two runners-up will make up the last eight for the Heineken Cup. But, for the first time, the next three best runners-up will join the race for the Amlin Challenge Cup crown.

With the carrot of more European competition dangling before them, and the possibility of potentially winning a coveted European title, there is bound to be an added edge to the final 24 Pool fixtures.

“We are used at this time of year to doing the maths to find out who might qualify for the Heineken Cup quarter-finals, but now the calculations will run even deeper with three more teams in the running to reach the last eight of the Amlin Challenge Cup,” said ERC Chief Executive Derek McGrath.

“There is already a big battle going on in the Amlin Challenge Cup for the teams to top the Pools. It's Leeds Carnegie v Bourgoin in Pool 1, Connacht Rugby v Montpellier in Pool 2, Toulon v Saracens and London Wasps v Racing-Metro 92 in Pools 3 and 4 and Newcastle Falcons v Montauban in Pool 5.

“Whoever comes out on top in the Amlin Challenge Cup Pools will have home advantage over their Heineken Cup rivals and the quality of those games promises to be of the very highest standard.”

HEINEKEN CUP WELCOMES 10 MILLION FANS – AND COUNTING

The Heineken Cup has smashed through another landmark barrier – over 10,000,000 fans going through the turnstiles to watch Heineken Cup action.

The 1,025 tournament matches played so far have attracted 10,095,148 supporters.

The first 14 years of the tournament saw combined audiences of 9,549,461 at the 977 matches. The four rounds so far during this 15th season have seen 151,417; 129,613; 132,594 and 132,063 attend the 12 matches each weekend.



THE AMLIN CHALLENGE CUP QUARTER-FINAL DRAW

The top four Amlin Challenge Cup Pool winners will have home advantage with the quarter-finalists ranked accordingly:

- 1 ACC 1 (Top ranked ACC Pool winner)
- 2 ACC 2 (Second ranked ACC Pool winner)
- 3 ACC 3 (Third ranked ACC Pool winner)
- 4 ACC 4 (Fourth ranked ACC Pool winner)
- 5 Heineken Cup 1
- 6 Heineken Cup 2
- 7 Heineken Cup 3
- 8 ACC 5 (Fifth ranked ACC Pool winner)

The quarter-final pairings will be:

- 1 (ACC 1) v 8 (ACC 5)
- 2 (ACC 2) v 7 (Heineken Cup 3)
- 3 (ACC 3) v 6 (Heineken Cup 2)
- 4 (ACC 4) v 5 (Heineken Cup 1)

... AND THIS IS HOW IT WOULD LOOK TODAY

As things stand in the Pools in both tournaments at present, the draw for the Amlin Challenge Cup quarter finals would be as follows:

Amlin Challenge Cup Rankings - 1. Toulon 18 pts, 2. Connacht Rugby 17 pts (16 tries), 3. London Wasps 17 pts (11 tries), 4. Newcastle Falcons 15 pts, 5. Leeds Carnegie 14 pts

Heineken Cup Pool Rankings - 9. Sale Sharks 13 pts (HC 1), 10. Leicester Tigers 12 pts (HC 2), 11. Ulster 9 pts (HC 3)

DEMONSTRATION Amlin Challenge Cup Draw (after 4 rounds only)

Toulon v Leeds Carnegie
Connacht v Ulster
London Wasps v Leicester Tigers
Newcastle Falcons v Sale Sharks