

Top 5 MLS Cup Finals by TV viewing figures



Author: Liam Setterlund

The glorious sport of Soccer or football is one of the most popular pastimes around the globe. In the United States, Major League Soccer is a relatively newer growing brand, although it has rapidly gained more viewers since its creation in the 20th century.

Of course, you would expect the most watched event to be the finals, which in the American soccer league is called the MLS Cup. In this article, we'll show the growth of MLS viewership, listing the top five most watched MLS Cup Finals by TV viewing figures, what years they occurred, what teams were playing and how many onlookers there were on TV.

Top 5 most watched MLS Cups in TV history

2001 MLS Cup Final - San Jose Earthquakes vs. LA Galaxy - 2+ million viewers

In what would typically be a normal Californian clash, the 2001 MLS Cup between the San Jose Earthquakes and LA Galaxy would generate an immense amount of viewers, an amount the MLS hadn't reached since the late 20th century.

Unfortunately for the city of dreams, the Galaxy would lose to the Earthquakes 2-1 off an overtime golden goal scored by Dwayne De Rosario in the 96th minute. Totalling a massive 2+ million viewers, this game would go down as one of the most watched MLS Cup Finals by TV viewing figures.

2022 MLS Cup Final - LAFC vs. Philadelphia Union - 2.2+ million viewers

About 21 years later, the second and newly formed LAFC would take on the Philadelphia Union for a record 21st-century MLS viewership count of 2.2+ million live viewers.

The game's scoreline almost represents why it had the viewership it had, with the second half of the game ending 2-2 and both teams heading to overtime. Then, of course, in the 120+4' Jack Elliot scores for the Union, only for LAFC's Gareth Bale to equalize in the 120+8', sending his team to a 3-0 victory in penalties.

1998 MLS Cup Final - Chicago Fire vs. DC United - 2.2+ million viewers

It's no surprise the 1998 MLS Cup Final between the Chicago Fire and D.C. United ties viewership with the 2022 MLS Cup Final, considering the Chicago Fire team had just been created that season.

Amassing over 2.2 million viewers on the TV, Chicago would shut out D.C. 2-0 in the Rose Bowl Stadium in California and be the first team in MLS history to win the MLS Cup Final in the first year of its creation. It's only fair that the 1998 MLS Cup Final is listed here as one of the most watched MLS Cup Finals by TV viewing figures.

1997 MLS Cup Final - DC United vs. Colorado Rapids - 2.6+ million viewers

D.C. United was one of the few original MLS teams that had an intimidating winning record even by 1997. With already one MLS Cup title in the bag, their 1997 MLS Cup Final match vs. the Colorado Rapids would generate close to 2.6 million live TV watchers, falling slightly short of its 1996 Cup prequel.

Still, 2.6+ million live viewers is incredible for pre-2000s, and D.C. United would go on to win their second MLS Cup title, beating the Rapids in a close 2-1 championship game, making it one of the most watched MLS Cup Finals by TV viewing figures.

1996 MLS Cup Final - DC United vs. LA Galaxy - 3.1+ million viewers

Before ever winning their first MLS Cup, D.C. United would unknowingly play the most live-watched MLS Cup Final in history against a tough LA Galaxy team. The Foxboro-hosted game would end 2-2 in regulation, where D.C. would nab the trophy with a golden goal win in overtime, ending the game 3-2.

Not only would this game generate over 3.1 million viewers, but this would be the start of D.C.'s dominant MLS Cup run throughout the next decade, and it certainly describes why this game was the most watched MLS Cup Finals by TV viewing figures.