

Television

MLS-WORLD CUP DEAL MARKS NEW ERA

There will be at least five more years of MLS on national television, and American fans are also assured of watching all 2002 World Cup games live with English commentary.

Those are the primary elements stemming from the announcement that MLS has bought U.S. TV rights to the 2002 and 2006 World Cup tournaments as well as those to the 2003 Women's World Cup.

The World Cup rights will be brokered to the ABC and ESPN networks in part exchange for five years of MLS coverage.

For the 2002 World Cup, 17 games will

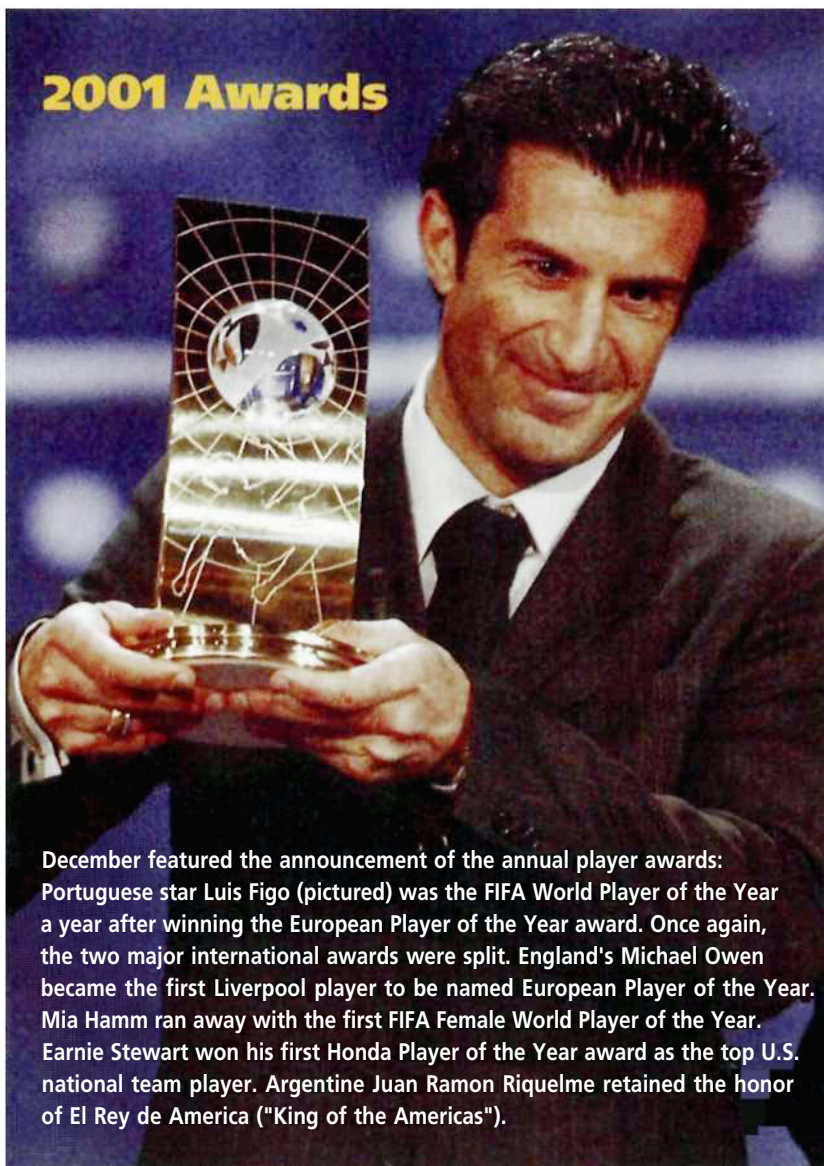
be shown on ESPN and 46 on ESPN2. The final will air on ABC. All will have late-night or early-morning kickoff times in the United States. ABC will air at least eight repeats on tape-delay.

A figure of \$40 million has been reported to purchase the rights.

MLS has formed a new company to acquire and market the rights to these events and other properties (*see My View on Page 19*).

ABC is scheduled to air three 2002 MLS games — including MLS Cup and the All-Star Game. ESPN2's Soccer Saturday games will be at 4 p.m. (Eastern) on 22 occasions this season. Four Thursday telecasts also are scheduled. MLS will not be on ESPN in 2002.

— **Ridge Mahoney**



December featured the announcement of the annual player awards: Portuguese star Luis Figo (pictured) was the FIFA World Player of the Year a year after winning the European Player of the Year award. Once again, the two major international awards were split. England's Michael Owen became the first Liverpool player to be named European Player of the Year. Mia Hamm ran away with the first FIFA Female World Player of the Year. Earnie Stewart won his first Honda Player of the Year award as the top U.S. national team player. Argentine Juan Ramon Riquelme retained the honor of El Rey de America ("King of the Americas").

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