

Scant MLS playoff coverage

A-League has more national broadcasts during playoffs than top league.

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Regular-season ratings for MLS games on ESPN2 show a healthy

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increase since the World Cup, but there won't be much national exposure during the postseason.

The only national TV games are a Sept. 26 first-round match on ESPN2 and the Oct. 20 final on ABC. A second ABC game, announced for Oct. 6 in MLS's preseason release of its national television schedule, won't be aired.

The rain-lashed All-Star Game Aug. 3 drew a 0.7 rating (737,000 metered households) on ABC — almost an hour of the broadcast consisted of last year's All-Star Game — prior to the telecast being switched over to ESPN at 6 p.m.

ET. The last 24 minutes on ESPN came in at 0.36 (310,000).

For the regular season, 23 telecasts have registered an average rating of 0.18 on ESPN2, which translates into 154,466 households.

The highest-rated ESPN2 telecasts were games on Aug. 10 (Dallas-Chicago) and Aug. 17 (San Jose-D.C. United) that drew a 0.31 (261,376 households) and a 0.30 (245,707), respectively.

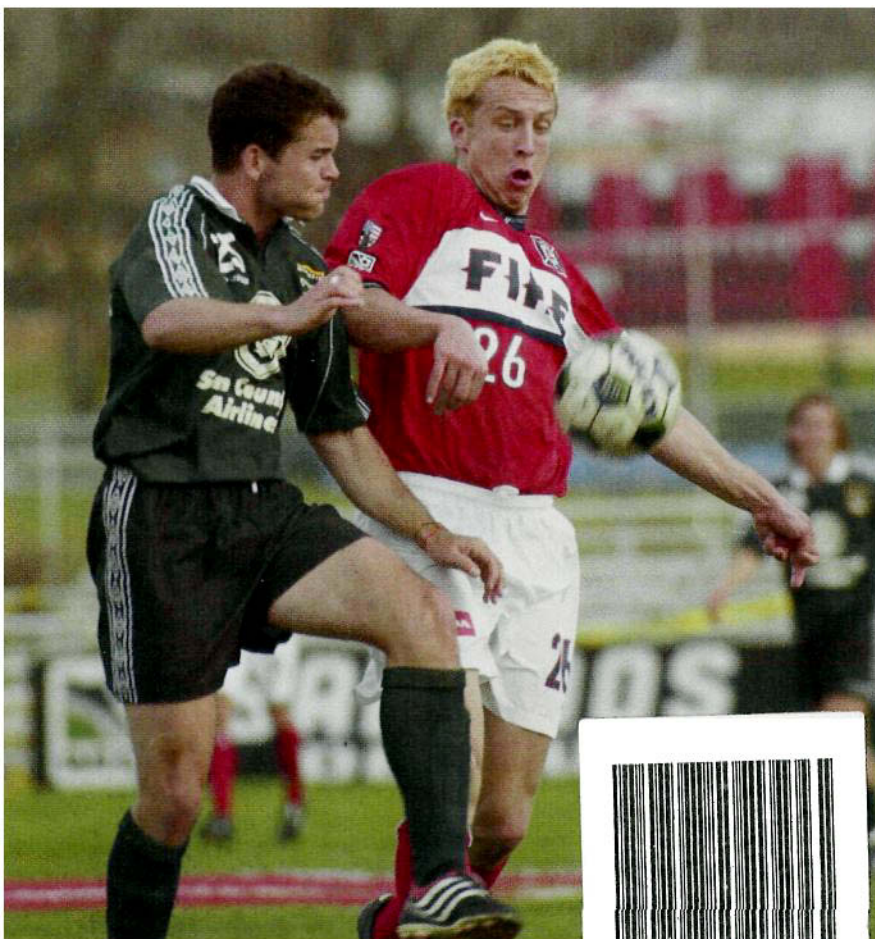
iNDEMAND DISPUTE. MLS has run into snags with pay-per-view operator iNDEMAND.

iNDEMAND is contractually required to offer all regional MLS broadcasts, but it began cutting two games per week in late August because of a bandwidth dispute over how many available channels it is supposed to be provided.

During the playoffs, DirecTV and DISH are scheduled to carry regional broadcasts as per their regular-season arrangements. How much

coverage will be offered by iNDEMAND is undetermined.

Players such as the Milwaukee Rampage's Jeremy Aldrich (left, battling a Chicago Fire foe in an exhibition) received national exposure thanks to Fox Sports World's coverage.



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A-LEAGUE GOES NATIONAL. Bruce Arena recently mentioned he was impressed with the quality of the A-League.

The Seattle Sounders' Zach Kingsley's performance in a May match against Portland convinced Colorado Rapids assistant coach Paul Bravo that Kingsley was MLS material.

Both revelations came about thanks to the A-League securing, this season, a national-television contract for the first time in its history. In fact, thanks to the 25-game package, which included the finals of all five USL leagues (including the A-League final Sept. 28 at 8 p.m. ET), the A-League boasts more postseason national telecasts (three) than MLS (two).

"I've talked to a number of MLS GMs and coaches who say they regularly follow our games," says USL chief operating officer Dave Askinas. "And I've noticed that soccer people around the country try to get their hands on digital cable or small dish to get Fox Sports World."

The USL pays for the game production and splits ad revenue with the network. ■