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WEEK 48



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SALE DATES: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6TH THRU TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 2023

THIS WEEK'S FEATURED ITEMS





CHAMPIONS! Columbus Crew lift MLS Cup 2023 over LAFC

Columbus Crew have turned their bold, possession-centric style into the league's ultimate prize, capturing MLS Cup 2023 presented by Audi with a 2-1 win over LAFC.

Head coach Wilfried Nancy's team produced a masterclass performance Saturday at rain-soaked Lower.com Field, resulting in the Eastern Conference club's third-ever MLS Cup after their 2008 and 2020 squads also entered the history books as champions.

First-half goals from Cucho Hernández (33') and Yaw Yeboah (37') gave Columbus a cushion to absorb a Dénis Bouanga (74') lifeline, denying LAFC's MLS Cup repeat quest. In the process, head coach Wilfried Nancy's group has climbed the 29-team mountaintop that began with MLS is Back weekend on Feb. 25.

Before raising the Philip F. Anschutz Trophy, Columbus pulled ahead through Cucho's authoritative penalty kick – helping him earn MLS Cup MVP presented by Audi honors and finish with an Audi MLS Cup Playoffs co-leading five goals. That opportunity arose when referee Armando Villarreal pointed to the spot, judging LAFC defender Diego Palacios to have handled a flicked-up touch from Diego Rossi.

The Crew, the league's highest-scoring team in 2023, quickly doubled their advantage when Yeboah capped an 11-pass buildup. The Crew's left wingback was on the receiving end of Malte Amundsen's line-splitting through ball, then sliced home an outside-the-foot finish past goalkeeper Maxime Crépeau.

But, as was so often the case in 2023, Bouanga would not be silenced. The Best XI forward slipped a second-effort shot past goalkeeper Patrick Schulte, drawing him level with teammate Carlos Vela for the most calendar-year goals (38) in MLS across all competitions (Vela's MVP-winning 2019).

The Black & Gold's late push fizzled out, though. And the hosts, after seven minutes of second-half stoppage time, were left dancing as champions.

Goals

33' - CLB - Cucho Hernández 37' - CLB - Yaw Yeboah 74' - LAFC - Dénis Bouanga

Three Things

THE BIG PICTURE: Four years ago, only 1,500 fans watched Columbus beat Seattle Sounders FC for the MLS Cup 2020 trophy – a necessity at Historic Crew Stadium amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, 20,802 fans flooded to the club's new state-of-the-art venue for an unforgettable night. Factor in how last December Columbus compensated CF Montréal to extract Nancy as head coach and the club's rise is even more memorable. LAFC? They lost their third final of the year and got a cold reminder of how hard it is to repeat, something not accomplished since the 2011-12 LA Galaxy.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: Yeboah's goal was champagne football in motion. What a ball from Amundsen.

MAN OF THE MATCH: Cucho! The MLS Cup MVP crowned a spectacular year and is forever a Crew legend.



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December 9, 2023 Kenneth Fernandez

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