

= 2011 Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup Final =

The 2011 Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup Final was a soccer match between the Seattle Sounders FC and the Chicago Fire , played on October 4 , 2011 , at CenturyLink Field in Seattle , Washington . The match was the culmination of the 2011 Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup , a tournament open to amateur and professional soccer teams affiliated with the United States Soccer Federation (U.S. Soccer) . This was the 98th edition of the U.S. Open Cup , the oldest ongoing competition in American soccer . The Seattle Sounders FC won by defeating the Chicago Fire 2 ? 0 with goals scored by Fredy Montero and Osvaldo Alonso . The attendance was 36 @,@ 615 , breaking the record for the final set the previous year when Seattle also won and hosted . Seattle became the first team since 1968 to win three consecutive U.S. Open Cup championships and the fourth team ever to do so in the 98 @-@ year history of the tournament .

Sounders FC automatically qualified for the third round of the U.S. Open Cup tournament by finishing among the top six in the 2010 Major League Soccer season . The Fire did not automatically qualify , and had to play through two qualification rounds before entering the official tournament . Prior to the final , Chicago and Seattle had met twice in 2011 , with Seattle winning one game and the other ending in a draw .

The final was televised live on Fox Soccer . This was the second consecutive year the tournament final was played at CenturyLink Field . As the winner of the tournament , Seattle earned a berth in the 2012 ? 13 CONCACAF Champions League and received a \$ 100 @,@ 000 cash prize . Chicago received a \$ 50 @,@ 000 prize as the runner @-@ up . Following the final , criticism was raised regarding Seattle winning hosting rights for each round they played . In response , U.S. Soccer announced changes to the rules for determining the host of tournament matches .

= = Road to the final = =

The U.S. Open Cup is an annual American soccer competition open to all U.S. Soccer affiliated teams , from amateur adult club teams to the professional clubs of Major League Soccer (MLS) . The 2011 tournament was the 98th edition of the oldest soccer tournament in the United States .

The MLS , which has teams that play in both the United States and Canada , was allowed to enter eight of its fifteen U.S.-based teams in the tournament . The top six MLS teams from the previous season 's league standings qualified automatically for the tournament , while the remaining two spots were determined by preliminary qualification matches . The eight MLS entries began play in the third round of the tournament . In 2010 , Seattle Sounders FC finished among the top six in the MLS overall league standings to qualify for the third round of the 2011 U.S. Open Cup . The Chicago Fire however , did not and therefore had to play a series of qualification matches against fellow MLS teams that finished outside of the top six to qualify for the Open Cup tournament .

= = = Chicago Fire = = =

Prior to reaching the 2011 final , the Chicago Fire had reached the U.S. Open Cup final five times in their 14 @-@ year history , the most of any MLS franchise , winning four out of five of the tournaments ? most recently in 2006 . The Fire began their 2011 Open Cup campaign on March 30 , 2011 , in the MLS qualification semifinals , hosting the Colorado Rapids at Shea Stadium in Peoria , Illinois . Chicago scored first with a goal from Gastón Puerari right before half time . Just one minute into the second half , the Rapids equalized off of a goal from Andre Akpan . Following Akpan 's goal , the match remained tied for 15 minutes until Chicago 's Jalil Anibaba scored the match @-@ winning goal in the 61st minute of play . Chicago moved on to the next round of qualification with a final score of 2 ? 1 .

The Fire then turned their attention to their second and final qualification match hosted by the San Jose Earthquakes at Buck Shaw Stadium in Santa Clara , California . Played on May 24 , 2011 , in front of 4 @,@ 124 spectators , the hosts took a two @-@ goal lead in the first half with Ellis McLoughlin and Justin Morrow scoring in the 14th and 43rd minutes , respectively . The Fire halved

the deficit in the 61st minute with a goal from Orr Barouch . Fifteen minutes later the Fire tied the score with a strike from Yamith Cuesta . The score remained tied until the end of regulation , leading to extra time , during which Chicago 's Gonzalo Segares was ejected for dissent . Despite the Earthquakes ' man advantage , the two sides remained tied during overtime , prompting a penalty shootout . In the fifth round of penalties , with Chicago leading 5 ? 4 , San Jose 's Scott Sealy missed his shot as it deflected off of the crossbar , giving the Fire a second qualifier victory and a berth into the third round of the 2011 U.S. Open Cup tournament .

In the third round , Chicago faced the Rochester Rhinos of the USL Pro division . Rochester hosted the match on June 28 at the Rhinos ' Sahlen 's Stadium in front of a crowd of 5 @, @ 558 . The Fire 's Diego Chaves netted the match 's only goal in the 37th minute of play , earning the Fire a spot in the quarterfinals for the first time since 2008 .

In the quarterfinals , held on July 12 , 2011 , the Fire hosted MLS Eastern Conference rival the New York Red Bulls at Toyota Park in Bridgeview , Illinois . Against mostly reserves for New York , the Fire won the match 4 ? 0 with two goals from Orr Barouch and a goal each scored by Dominic Oduro and Yamith Cuesta . Due to power outages in the area following a severe thunderstorm , the game 's start time was moved up from 7 : 30 pm to 5 : 00 pm local time , resulting in a late @-@ arriving attendance of about 2 @, @ 000 . Following the match , uproar from Red Bull fans prompted coach Hans Backe to explain that fatigue was the reason for sending only his team 's reserve players and an assistant coach to Chicago . New York had lost to DC United in league play just 2 days earlier .

On August 31 , 2011 , the Fire played host to another USL Pro side , the Richmond Kickers , in the semifinal round . On their way to the semifinals , the Kickers defeated two MLS teams in consecutive rounds . They upset the Columbus Crew and Sporting Kansas City in the third round and the quarterfinals , respectively . The semifinal was hosted by the Fire at Toyota Park in front of a crowd of 8 @, @ 909 . In the 32nd minute , the Fire took the lead with a goal from Sebastián Grazzini . In the 61st minute , Chicago went up 2 ? 0 with a goal from Dominic Oduro . Seven minutes later , the Kickers cut the lead in half with a goal from Yomby William . The Fire won 2 ? 1 , earning their sixth trip to the U.S. Open Cup final .

= = = Seattle Sounders FC = = =

In 2009 , Seattle Sounders FC became the second MLS expansion club to win the U.S. Open Cup tournament , after the Chicago Fire in 1998 . They defended their title in 2010 to win a second straight championship . Prior to the final , Sounders FC played U.S. Open Cup home games at the Starfire Sports Complex in Tukwila , Washington . The facility is smaller than the club 's home stadium for league matches , CenturyLink Field , but Sounders FC representatives preferred the atmosphere at Starfire for smaller cup matches .

Sounders FC began the defense of their title on June 28 , 2011 , when they hosted the Kitsap Pumas of the USL Premier Development League from Bremerton , Washington . The match was played at Starfire in front of 3 @, @ 811 fans . Seattle took the lead in the 39th minute when Michael Fucito scored off a headed pass from Nate Jaqua . Early in the second half Fucito doubled the lead by taking a pass from Mike Seamon and shooting past several defenders for the goal . Kitsap attempted their comeback in the 71st minute when Nikolas Besagno scored off of a crossing pass from Robert Christner . In the 83rd minute , Kitsap forward Warlen Silva nearly equalized on a breakaway run , but his shot went into the side netting . Seattle was able to hold on for the 2 ? 1 victory .

Seattle then hosted their quarterfinal match on July 13 against a fellow MLS side , the Los Angeles Galaxy . The match was again held at Starfire , with an attendance of 4 @, @ 322 . Nate Jaqua scored following a pass from Pat Noonan in the 4th minute . In the 25th minute , Fredy Montero scored with a left footed shot off of an assist from Jaqua giving Seattle a 2 ? 0 lead . The Galaxy gained a goal back in the 40th minute when Adam Cristman scored on a cross from Chris Birchall . In the 74th minute , Seattle midfielder Lamar Neagle scored from a cross by Álvaro Fernández , extending Seattle 's lead to 2 goals .

On August 30 , 2011 , Sounders FC hosted their semifinal opponent , FC Dallas , in front of 4 @, @ 593 at Starfire Sports Complex . Both teams started their first team players for the match . Seattle applied offensive pressure for most of the first half and broke through with a goal in the 40th minute . Fredy Montero , who had just missed with a bicycle kick shot moments earlier , took a curling left @-@ footed shot in front of goal for the score . Dallas nearly equalized in the 49th minute when Marvin Chavez had a shot bounce hard off of the goal post . Dallas continued to attack for most of the second half , and Chavez again had a chance to equalize just before the final whistle , but his shot went high over the goal . With a final score of 1 ? 0 , Seattle secured their third straight appearance in the U.S. Open Cup final match . Following the match , Dallas coach Schellas Hyndman complained about how hosts are determined for U.S. Open Cup matches saying , " for me , this is one of the best events ? the Lamar Hunt Open Cup ? but I 'd really like to see it into a structure where it 's not a bid system . A bid system is where one team will buy the games because they 're bidding higher . " He continued , " it could go to the higher seeds , instead of a bid system where you 're spending money , or it could be pre @-@ determined . I think that brings out all the fairness to the event . "

= = Pre @-@ match = =

= = = Venue selection = = =

On August 26 , 2011 , U.S. Soccer announced the potential sites for the final , depending on the outcome of the semifinals . It was determined through a blind bid process that if Seattle qualified for the final , they would host it at CenturyLink Field regardless of the opponent , for the second straight year . If FC Dallas defeated Sounders FC in the semifinals , they would host the Richmond Kickers at Pizza Hut Park in Frisco , Texas , or visit the Chicago Fire at Toyota Park in Bridgeview , Illinois , depending on the outcome of the other semifinal match . Seattle defeated Dallas and Chicago defeated Richmond in the semifinals , which resulted in Sounders FC hosting the Fire in the 2011 Open Cup final at CenturyLink Field . Seattle had hosted the previous final , in 2010 , drawing a crowd of 31 @, @ 311 and breaking the 81 @-@ year @-@ old attendance record for the event set in 1929 when New York Hakoah defeated the Madison Kennel Club of St. Louis .

Tickets for the 2011 final went on sale to the public on September 6 . By September 19 , it was announced that 27 @, @ 000 tickets had already been sold . Nine days later , ticket sales surpassed 30 @, @ 000 and it was announced that the " Hawks Nest " bleacher seats in the north end of CenturyLink Field would be made available for the event . In the week leading up to the final , Sounders FC owner and general manager Adrian Hanauer indicated that sections of the stadium would continue to be opened to meet demand . He stated that " no paying customer would be turned away . "

= = = Analysis = = =

With a better MLS regular season record and home field advantage , Sounders FC were the favorites to win the match ; however , the Fire had improved throughout the year through better play from their wingers and midfielders .

Seattle and Chicago had met twice in MLS regular season matches in 2011 . The first meeting , on April 9 , 2011 , resulted in a 2 ? 1 win for Sounders FC in front of their home crowd . It was Seattle 's 5th game of the season . The second meeting was hosted by Chicago on June 4 , 2011 , and resulted in a 0 ? 0 draw . It was the first game for Chicago coach Frank Klopas as he replaced Carlos de los Cobos , who was fired by the club the previous week . As a player , Klopas had scored the winning goal for Chicago in the 1998 U.S. Open Cup final . As coach , ESPNChicago.com analyst Charlie Corr credited him with the team 's successful shift in tactics since previously meeting Seattle .

In the days leading up to the final , Seattle had recently finished a long road trip . Chicago 's

schedule made the match their third in a week 's time . In preparation for the final , the managers fielded weaker sides during their respective league matches two days before the game , allowing them to rest several regular starters . The Sounders were playing well , having already clinched a MLS playoff berth . A victory over the New England Revolution on the weekend prior to the final gave the team a three @-@ game winning streak . The Fire had defeated Real Salt Lake on September 28 , but their playoff chances were diminished after a tie against the Houston Dynamo on the weekend prior to the final .

= = Match = =

The match was televised live on Fox Soccer with coverage starting at 7 pm PT (02 : 00 UTC) . The attendance of 36 @, @ 615 was a record crowd for the competition 's final . Seattle 's Emerald City Supporters unveiled tifo before kickoff depicting the Grim Reaper over the graves of D.C. United , the Columbus Crew , and the Chicago Fire .

Injuries to key players were a concern for both teams in the buildup to the final . For Seattle , midfielder Mauro Rosales 's knee was injured and he did not recover in time for the final . Also , Sounders FC defender James Riley was recovering from a concussion . He practiced in the week prior to the final and started in the match . For Chicago , midfielder Sebastian Grazzini was a key player who was questionable before the match . Grazzini began the game on the bench for Chicago .

= = = First half = = =

The match started with a frenetic pace as both teams earned free kick attempts within the opening two minutes . Seattle forward Mike Fucito had the first goal scoring opportunity of the match in the eighth minute as he broke free in the penalty area and took a shot on goal . The shot was kicked away by Fire goalkeeper Sean Johnson . Neither side appeared to gain control as the match progressed through the first 10 minutes . In the 11th minute , Chicago midfielder Marco Pappa slipped between two defenders in the middle of the field and had a long range shot go just wide of the net . Two minutes later Pappa again had a long shot which forced Seattle goalkeeper Kasey Keller to make a save . Pappa was responsible for all five of his team 's shots in the first half . In the 26th minute , Patrick Nyarko was shown a yellow card by referee Alex Prus for a hard tackle on Seattle 's Osvaldo Alonso near the touch @-@ line .

As the match passed the 30 minute mark , Seattle began to take control as they held possession and created more scoring opportunities . Five minutes before half time Marco Pappa again tested the Seattle goalkeeper as he cut inside a defender and took a shot from 30 yards . The shot forced Kasey Keller to make a diving save . In the 44th minute Seattle striker Mike Fucito rushed onto a poor backpass by the Chicago defense and then backhealed a pass to Alvaro Fernandez who was streaking into the box . His shot was stopped with a reaching save by Chicago goalkeeper Sean Johnson . One minute later , in first half injury time , Seattle striker Fredy Montero nearly scored with a 20 @-@ yard shot that flew past the keeper and bounced off the left goal post . The half ended with the score tied 0 ? 0 .

= = = Second half = = =

At half time , Seattle midfielder Erik Friberg was subbed on for Alvaro Fernandez , who had suffered a slight concussion during the first half . Shortly after the second half began , Seattle nearly broke the stalemate . In the 53rd minute , a Sounders FC throw @-@ in was flicked on to Mike Fucito , who lifted a shot up and over the keeper . His shot was chased by several Chicago defenders as it crossed the goal mouth and bounced off the far goal post and back into play . In the 78th minute , Montero broke the deadlock on a corner kick taken by Erik Friberg . Sounders FC defender Jeff Parke headed the corner kick on goal and Chicago goalkeeper Sean Johnson saved the shot . The ball rebounded to the feet of Fredy Montero , who tapped the ball into the net for in

the first goal of the game . Sounders FC now had a 1 ? 0 lead .

For much of the first half and early second half , Sounders FC 's defensive efforts had been focused on closely defending Chicago midfielder Pável Pardo . With Pardo unable to distribute the ball to Chicago 's speedy wingers , Patrick Nyarko and Domonic Oduro , Chicago 's offense had been effectively neutralized for much of the match . Fire coach Frank Klopas made two substitutions late in the match , bringing on forward Diego Chaves in the 80th minute and midfielder Sebastián Grazzini in the 85th . Chicago 's best chance of the half came in the 90th minute when Dominic Oduro headed a shot toward Kasey Keller , who made the save even though the attempt was ruled offside .

As the match neared its conclusion , Chicago shifted players forward as they searched for an equalizing goal . However , in the sixth minute of stoppage time , Osvaldo Alonso scored Seattle 's second goal on a counterattack play as he dribbled around multiple defenders and the goalkeeper and finally tapped the ball into the net . The goal gave Sounders FC a 2 ? 0 lead and sealed the victory .

= = = Details = = =

= = = Statistics = = =

Overall

= = Post @-@ match = =

Most of the record crowd remained after the game as they watched Seattle players and coaches engaged in the post match trophy awarding ceremony and celebrated on the field . In the post match press conference , Sigi Schmid praised his team 's defensive efforts in the match , saying " We talked about making sure their defenders ? and primarily Pável Pardo ? didn ? t have a chance to lift their heads and hit those long balls in behind . " Schmid continued , " I thought Evans did a really good job . Sometimes we were stretched in the midfield , but I thought he did a very good job of stepping up to Pável . When you look at the 90 minutes , it was a rare occasion that he was able to hit a ball behind our defense . " Chicago midfielder Logan Pause commented on the game saying , " It ? s disappointing . We came here to win . We were under the gun all night . They ? re a great team , one of the best in the league . It was a great atmosphere and home field advantage . The better team won tonight unfortunately . "

The day after the match , Sounders FC flew a 3 @,@ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot (280 m2) scarf over Seattle and Bellevue in the afternoon and early evening respectively , in celebration of their victory . By winning the final , Sounders FC became the first MLS team to win the competition three times in a row , and the first club to do so in the competition since Greek American Atlas did so in 1968 , 42 years earlier . Seattle also became the fourth team in the 98 @-@ year history of the tournament to win three in a row . As U.S. Open Cup champions , Seattle received the \$ 100 @,@ 000 cash prize while Chicago was given \$ 50 @,@ 000 as the runner up . Seattle also earned a berth in the 2012 ? 13 CONCACAF Champions League with the victory . In the Champions League , Seattle won their group and were eventually knocked out of the tournament in the semifinals by Mexican club Santos Laguna .

Sounders FC midfielder Osvaldo Alonso was voted the " player of the round " for the final . Alonso was recognized for his goal scoring effort as well as his record @-@ setting fourth consecutive appearance as a player in the U.S. Open Cup final match . He had appeared first with the Charleston Battery in the 2008 final and then 3 times with Seattle from 2009 to 2011 . Seattle forward Fredy Montero was recognized as the " player of the tournament " as he scored the game winning goals for Sounders FC in their quarterfinal , semifinal , and final matches . Osvaldo Alonso was one of the four finalists for " player of the tournament " along with Montero and two players from the semifinalist Richmond Kickers ? Ronnie Pascale and David Bulow .

= = = Host selection process changes = = =

U.S. Soccer was criticized after the match for the secretive bid process that allows teams to outspend their opponents for hosting rights . Both the blind bidding process for hosting tournament matches and the manner in which MLS teams qualified for the tournament were widely criticized . An example of the concerns raised around hosting came from FC Dallas midfielder Daniel Hernandez on Twitter , where he complained about Seattle 's home @-@ field advantage throughout the 2011 tournament . Following the final , MLS and U.S. Soccer officials met to discuss rule changes to the tournament 's host bidding system and team qualification processes . Sounders FC owner Adrian Hanauer commented on the changes and the possibility of raising the profile of the tournament , " I don ' t think the bidding process is going to change the profile of the tournament , necessarily . It might make a few people happy , it might make a few people unhappy . But ultimately , I ' m not convinced that ' s what is going to raise the profile . "

In January 2012 , in preparation for the 2012 edition of the U.S. Open Cup , U.S. Soccer announced several changes to the tournament format . Included in these changes was the introduction of a new host selection process . Beginning in 2012 , for all rounds of the tournament through the quarterfinals , a random host selection process would be used . While in previous years a blind bidding system was used to determine the host of a match , the new process has the host determined by blind draw if both teams ' venues meet minimum standards . The blind bidding system for hosting rights remained in effect for the semifinals and final of the 2012 tournament . However , U.S. Soccer announced in 2013 that hosting for all rounds of the tournament would be determined randomly as long as both venues met minimum standards .