

The 2011 United States Major Soccer League will commence in mid March and has inspired me to research and validate a couple of points that I have believed for a while now:

1. The MLS has a higher percentage of home wins than most other leagues.
2. The betting markets covering the MLS offer greater value than markets that cover most other leagues.

If both these statements are true, then their combination leads to the inevitable conclusion that betting on the MLS is a must for all serious soccer punters.

For comparative purposes I've studied results in the MLS over the last five seasons and compared against the English Premier League. The English top flight is the most watched league in the world and probably the league that generates the most turnover with bookmakers. For this reason it works well as a comparative with the MLS.

The first point regarding the high percentage of home wins is something that I've noticed over the past few years. Obviously football results favour the home team as a rule, irrespective of the league or competition. In the MLS I began to notice, however, that results seem to favour the home teams even more than what I would consider to be normal. Average sides or sides towards the bottom of the table still manage to possess a reasonable home record. In order to set about illustrating this point I've compared results for both the MLS and English Premier League for the five seasons from 2006 to 2010.

As I wanted to illustrate how the trend is more significant for mid to lower side teams, I excluded the top third percentile from each season. This is reasonable when you consider that the top six or seven teams in the Premier League always possess strong home records. The same is true in all leagues, whether in Italy, Spain, Germany or the USA. I worked out the home

win percentage for teams in the bottom two thirds percentile and calculated the average percentage. My findings were significant as the table in Figure 1 demonstrates.

Fig 1. Home Win Ratio excluding Top Third Percentile

YEAR

MLS

EPL

2010

40%

39%

2009

47%

39%

2008

48%

37%

2007

41%

39%

2006

43%

39%

MEAN

44%

39%

The table illustrates that in each of the last five seasons, the home win ratio was higher in the MLS than in the English Premier League. Averaging out the home win percentage over five seasons sees a 5% variance between the two leagues, which, when you consider the amount of games played over five seasons, is a significant difference. Without bombarding you with numbers, another interesting statistic is that over five seasons, the team that finished bottom of the MSL had an average home win ratio of 30%. In the EPL the same study shows the team at the bottom had an average home win ration of 18%.



What is the reason for the significantly better home record of teams in the USA? It's open to debate but one obvious reason is the geographical spread of teams in the MLS. The San Jose Earthquakes are required to travel over 3,000 kms to play Chicago, while LA Galaxy are separated from Washington DC by over 4,300 kms. Often teams will go on the road for a period of time, playing up to three away games in succession. These periods of extended travel and being away from home for weeks on end surely take their toll.

And so to the second point – that the markets covering the MLS offer more attractive odds than most other leagues. This isn't as easy to illustrate, given that odds at the time a match was played aren't readily available. However I have a record of many MSL bets / tips over the 2010 season which validate my statement, especially when compared with odds available for similar type fixtures in the EPL. Take the following two matches:

1. July 2nd 2010: Real Salt Lake v New England



Coming into this match Salt Lake had a home record of five wins and two draws. They were also second only to LA Galaxy in the league. New England's six away games had resulted in five defeats, with their sole away win coming over bottom of the table DC United. They were the 4th worst team in the league at that point.

For comparative purposes imagine say Arsenal or Manchester City playing at home to Wigan or Birmingham. The odds on offer for a home win would most likely be in the 1.30 – 1.40 region. Real Salt Lake were priced at a very generous 1.65 in the above fixture, which they won 5-0.

2. Sept 17th 2010: LA Galaxy v DC United

The best team and top of the Western Conference played at home against the worst team who were bottom of the Eastern Conference. Galaxy had won seven of their eleven home games prior to this game, while DC United had lost eight of their twelve away games at that point. Can you imagine what odds would be available if the top team in the English Premier League (or any other league) hosted the team at the foot of the table? Best odds on offer would be around 1.15 to 1.20, if even that. LA Galaxy were quoted at 1.50 to beat DC United, which they did, by 2 goals to 1.

There are plenty more scenarios similar to the fixtures above with which I won't bore you. I think you'll agree that the variance in odds for home wins in these examples indicate just how attractive odds can be in the MLS betting market. Perhaps it's a question of a lack of interest in betting on American soccer, in comparison with the huge number of bets placed on European fixtures. However the reason itself isn't of great importance. The message is clear. The MLS

has a higher home win ratio than most other leagues and the MLS betting market offers significantly higher odds for the home team. You'll see for yourself when the league kicks off on March 15th. Go to our [home page](#) to become a member and receive our **free soccer tips, football picks and betting advice**

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