

Rising Vodacom United Rugby Championship sets all-time record audience for single round

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The Vodacom United Rugby Championship has set a new all-time record audience with a global viewership of just under three million tuning in across Round 8.



Following on from last season's record viewership for a single campaign (37.4million) fans are continuing to watch the Vodacom United Rugby Championship in greater numbers as the tightest race for the play-offs has begun.

Coming off the back of two record rounds of attendance in R8 and R9 (held over December and January), the league's total viewership for the season is also tracking at double-digit growth thanks to new rivalries, the league's level of competitiveness and the jeopardy attached to the play-off race.

Additionally, at the mid-season point 51% of Vodacom URC games have resulted in a winning margin of seven or less points which is up from the season averages of 34% in the past two years. In figures verified by Nielsen audience data, a total of **2,978,611** tuned in across Round 8 where some of the Vodacom URC's biggest derby matches took place.

Games in Limerick and Cape Town drew the greatest interest during Round 8 with the Cape Town clash between the DHL Stormers and Vodacom Bulls totalling 685,243 viewers across all territories.

Not far behind that, the Irish derby match-up between Munster and Leinster on December 26 drew an audience of 639,343 across all territories – the game also drew a peak live audience of 537,300. Between Rounds 3 and 9, five of those weekends accounted for at least 2.5 million viewers each, ranking them amongst some of the highest viewed in the league's history.

The addition of Sky Italia to the Vodacom URC's broadcast partners has also brought with it a welcome increase of viewership of the league's Italian teams. Benetton have seen their audience grow by 129% and Zebre Parma are up 39%.

The growth in TV audiences is matched by an increase in attendances to date while the league's social media following has also grown by 9% since the beginning of the season.

Martin Anayi, CEO, United Rugby Championship, said: *“More people than ever are watching the Vodacom URC and that sustained and rising interest is brilliant news for our teams and the wider game of rugby. We’re thrilled to hit this milestone in a year where we have had a wide range of positive metrics to celebrate. Our league has never been as compelling and through the work of our teams and broadcasters we are seeing attendances and audiences grow in tandem.*

“To see almost three million tune in over one round is incredible and sends a really positive message about the appeal rugby has in an incredibly competitive entertainment industry when fans have so much choice when it comes to what they watch. I’d like to also thank all of our broadcast partners who continue to produce such high-quality coverage and collaborate with each other, it’s clearly making a difference.”

Each round of the United Rugby Championship is broadcast live on the following broadcasters in its core markets: RTE, TG4, Premier Sports and URC.tv (Rep of Ireland); BBC Northern Ireland, BBC Wales, S4C and Viaplay (UK); Sky Italia (Italy); SuperSport (South Africa); and FloSports (USA).

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Vodacom United Rugby Championship

The Vodacom URC is a global club rugby league where 16 teams from five nations compete across two hemispheres. The URC is made up of teams from Ireland, South Africa, Wales, Italy and Scotland.

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