

NFL

106.5 million viewers tune in to watch Super Bowl XLIV



More people watched Super Bowl XLIV than any other TV program in United States history.

NICK BLAKE
sports editor

In the franchise's 43rd season, the New Orleans Saints played in and won their first Super Bowl in team history.

Not only did the Saints make history on the field by beating the Indianapolis Colts in Super Bowl XLIV, they also helped make history for American TV viewership.

According to the Nielsen Company TV ratings, about 106.5 million people tuned in to watch Super Bowl XLIV.

This didn't only shatter ratings for Super Bowl games, it also set the record for the most watched TV program in U.S. history.

Until Super Bowl XLIV, the

most watched Super Bowl was Super Bowl XLIII between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Arizona Cardinals.

Almost 98.7 million people watched last year's big game, over seven million less than this year.

The most watched TV program in U.S. history wasn't a sporting event though, it was the season finale of the hit show, *MASH*.

MASH's season finale drew in 106 million viewers in February 1983. In 1983 there were 83.3 million homes with TVs. Today there are 115 million.

NBC, ABC and CBS basically ruled TV in that era. With limited viewing options in 1983, *MASH* had an extreme advantage, compared to TV today

which has hundreds of options for viewers.

However, with the intense media coverage and programming for big-event programs, sporting events are able to draw in millions of viewers.

Even though the advertisement increases every year, the tight game and the winter storm that hit the mid-Atlantic certainly helped ratings.

The story of the New Orleans Saints surely had something to do with the spike in ratings.

Four years after Hurricane Katrina, nobody expected the Saints to be in the Super Bowl. But as the city's icon, the Saints provided football fans with a feel-good story that had people tuning in.

WINTER OLYMPICS

Team USA gears up for the winter games in Vancouver

NICK BLAKE
sports editor

America's top winter athletes will come together with the rest of the world in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada for the 21st Winter Olympic Games.

Team USA finished second in total medal count in the 2006 games with 25, trailing only Germany, who finished with 29 total medals.

Team USA features some of the world's top athletes, in their respective sports, in the world. Snowboarder Shaun White is only 23 years old, but won a gold medal in Torino in 2006 in the men's half-pipe and will be looking to add to his medals in the 2010 games.

White also holds a record 10 Winter X Games medals, setting him at the top of his sport.

Snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler is among the top female snowboarders in the world. Bleiler is a 2006 games silver medalist and is extremely decorated beyond the Olympics. Nine World Cup medals and four Winter X Games medals are among her accomplishments.

From the snow to the ice, speed skater Apolo Anton Ohno has become one of the most well-known winter athletes of all time.

Ohno won a gold medal and two bronze medals in the 2006 games and has a total of five Olympic medals.

He is expected to be a major player for a strong U.S. speed-skating team, and with only one more medal win, he will be the most decorated Winter Olympian in U.S. history.

Also hitting the ice will be the U.S. men's



skateboard.about.com
Shaun White

and women's hockey teams, both looking to trump Canada and Russia in the hockey rink.

The women's team earned a bronze medal in Torino in 2006. Led by three-time Olympian and 31-year-old mother Jenny Potter, the women's team will be looking to make a strong showing in the games this year and bring back another medal to the United States.

On the men's side, every player on the roster is a current NHL'er.

The 2006 team advanced to the medal round, but fell short and left without a medal four years ago.

The U.S. World Junior team, a major underdog, defeated the tournament favorite Canadian team 6-5 in overtime on Jan. 6, setting the stage for the men's Olympic team.

Many U.S. hockey followers

are calling this one of the biggest wins in U.S. hockey history, right along with the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" Olympic team.

Team USA will feature Brooks Orpik of the Pittsburgh Penguins, Ryan Miller of the Buffalo Sabres and Ryan Malone, a former Penguin and a Pittsburgh native who currently plays for the Tampa Bay Lightning.

In total, Team USA will be sending over 200 athletes to compete in all 15 Winter Olympic Games. There will be over 2,000 athletes from 91 countries all over the world competing to win Olympic medals for their nations.

The Olympic Cauldron will be lit in Vancouver on Feb. 12, and competition will begin on that date. The last day of competition will be on Feb. 28, prior to the extinguishing of the Olympic flame.

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