# Data Shows Streaming Champions League Football Matches from Unverified Sources is One of the Hottest Ways for Cyber Hooligans to Hack Devices

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Avast blocks of dangerous websites rose 45% globally during football matches of the 2022-2023 season with sharp spikes at kickoff as viewers searched for free streaming platforms
TEMPE, Ariz. & PRAGUE, June 1, 2023 – Fans gearing up to watch the UEFA Champions League final on June 10 should think twice before they stream the game. According to data from Avast, a leader in digital security and privacy, and a brand of Gen™ (NASDAQ: GEN), football fans across Europe have already been targeted on match days – especially around kickoff – showing drastic increases in blocked cyberattacks.

“As we know, cybercriminals capitalize on human emotions – and the desire of fans to watch their team play in the Champions League is a strong one,” said David Jursa, Malware Analysis Lead for Avast. “Unfortunately, criminals often use promises of free streaming as a lure and pepper popup ads, phishing sites, malvertising and other scams throughout a stream to get access to people’s personal data and devices.”

**Risky Streaming Business**

Fans are rightfully excited about watching their teams compete in Europe’s elite competition and are often willing to dig deep into the depths of the internet to stream matches for free. Unfortunately, this behavior comes with a price. Anyone who has tried to search terms such as “Stream Inter Milan vs. Manchester City for Free” knows the hoops people jump through to get to such games – usually the free streaming links don’t show up on the first pages of search results but rather far in the search queue.

In a majority of cases, such links lead only to malware without a free video stream. A common journey for this infection starts with a page that displays a fake request to download a required video software in order to start streaming. Spoiler alert: it’s a malware package and there will be no stream after its installed. It may also request your personal details such as email address, telephone number, or address to start playing. Procviding this information leads to the same conclusion. Even when fans eventually find a free stream, they will often notice layers of popups hiding the video content that need to be clicked on to be removed. These popups contain great offers and advertisements which are often phishing scams and malvertising – clicking on these links can result in devices being infected, user data being stolen and sometimes worse, including financial loss and identity theft.

**Dangerous Data**

Avast Researchers noticed spikes in blocked URL attacks during matches of the 2022-2023 UEFA Champions League season. To better understand the interactions between visitors and malicious sites, they looked at blocked URLs on a global scale and then the five major football countries in Europe: Spain, Italy,

United Kingdom, Germany and France.

The data was clear. Not only was there a significant increase in blocked URL attacks on match days (vs. days in which there was no major football match), but spikes in blocks can be seen almost exactly at the time of kickoff. Globally, Avast saw an increase of over 45% in attacks during Champions League matches.

When looking at the country level, some fans seem to have riskier streaming habits than others, with Spanish viewers having the highest risk with an increase in attacks during matches of over 154%. In the spirit of competition, Avast ranked the markets from safest to most dangerous viewing behaviors based on increases in blocked URL attacks on match days versus non-match days:

Germany (35% increase in attacks)
United Kingdom (39% increase in attacks)
Italy (67% increase in attacks)
France (93% increase in attacks)
Spain (154% increase in attacks)
Champions League Free Streaming:
Data shows an average 45% increase in URL-based attacks globally during football matches

**3 Tips to Watch Safely**

Choose an authorized viewing method. We know, this often means paying! The only way to ensure you are viewing content safely is to watch via official sites. If paying to stream isn't an option, local restaurants and pubs often show the game live.
Think before you click. It's easy to quickly click through the Internet, but it's one of the fastest ways to get yourself in trouble. If you think you're safe but start to see suspicious content and popups, slow down and make sure not to click any links.
Always use security software. If you venture into areas of the Internet that you're not sure are safe or not, the best thing you can do is have security software on your machine to help guide you. In case malicious URLs or sites are on your search journey. The right software will help block the dangerous popups and sites before they can cause serious harm.
For more information on how to protect yourself online, visit www.avast.com