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Arsenal

16:08 BST 20 October

Arteta on Hincapie, player initiative and Gunners 'conviction'

Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta has been speaking to the media before Tuesday's Premier League game against Atletico Madrid at the Emirates (kick-off 20:00 BST).

Here are the key lines from his news conference:

- Defender Piero Hincapie is available, with Arteta explaining he was not in the squad for the game at Fulham because it "came a bit too quickly for him".
- Arteta said he "loves the initiative" of his players after a video shared to social media showed William Saliba watching Atletico Madrid on the coach after winning at Craven Cottage: "I'm very pleased because I didn't encourage it - that came from them."
- On being favourites to win the Premier League after extending their lead at the top to three points: "The only thing I embrace is when I see the team, the energy, the temperature and the quality that they can deliver. That gives me the conviction that we can go all the way."
- He said the team has "shown a different kind of maturity" this season, carrying "a threat" and "conviction".

- However, he accepted Arsenal have to maintain that "for another 30 games", which is the biggest challenge.
- He said Atletico boss Diego Simeone is someone he looks up to because "he still has that capacity to transmit a willingness to win" after 14 years in charge.

Follow the rest of the day's football news

Listen to full commentary of Arsenal v Atletico Madrid from 20:00 BST on Tuesday on BBC Radio 5 Live

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12:35 BST 20 October

Arsenal's defence on course for record

Paul Birch
BBC Sport journalist



While Liverpool's defence is currently porous, Arsenal's appears increasingly impenetrable.

The Gunners' 1-0 win over Fulham was built on an eighth clean sheet in 11 matches in all competitions this season.

The only goals the league leaders have conceded have been via a 30-yard thunderbolt from Liverpool's Dominik Szoboszlai, one from unstoppable Manchester City forward Erling Haaland and a header by in-form Nick Woltemade at a raucous St James' Park. Only Haaland's came from open play.

In comparison, the Premier League champions have let in 17 goals and kept only two clean sheets in their 12 fixtures.

Arsenal are not just stopping sides scoring, they are denying them as much as a sniff at goal. For the first time since November 2003, during what turned out to be their Invincibles campaign, Arteta's team have not faced a shot on target in back-to-back league matches.

And they have given up just five big chances in eight league matches this season. To put that in context, Manchester United had five big chances to score at Anfield alone yesterday.

Remarkably, the last time they conceded more than two league goals in a game was in December 2023 at Luton Town.

Carry on like this and the likes of David Raya, William Saliba and Gabriel will break Chelsea's legendary record for the fewest goals conceded in a Premier League season when the Blues let in just 15 in 2004-05.

Arsenal's defence on track for record

Fewest goals conceded in a Premier League season

	Goals conceded	Average goals conceded per game
Arsenal (2025-26 so far)	3 (in 8 games)	0.38
Chelsea (2004-05)	15	0.39
Arsenal (1998-99)	17	0.45
Liverpool (2018-19)	22	0.58
Chelsea (2005-06)	22	0.58
Manchester United (2007-08)	22	0.58

Source: Opta

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09:58 BST 20 October

Fulham 0-1 Arsenal - the fans' verdict

YOUR OPINIONS





MATCH OF THE DAY HIGHLIGHTS




Premier League

We asked for your thoughts after Saturday's Premier League game between Fulham and Arsenal.

Here are some of your comments:

Fulham fans

Rob: Lots of huff and puff without looking like scoring. Injuries piling up is a worry. Josh King looks like our only threat and when he went off we lost any spark. The way Arsenal celebrated I thought they had won the league, so we must have been OK.

James: Frustrating. I was never really expecting a win against an in-form Arsenal. There were sparks of hope but they couldn't finish any of them. We need their corner routines.

Robin: Three defeats on the bounce and injuries mounting up. The poor summer transfer window is bearing fruit now. We could be in real bother if we carry on like this.

Arsenal fans

Vince: In previous seasons, we wouldn't have kept a lead like we did. Now the resilience and confidence in this team appear to be growing from game to game. If we are to be champions for the first time since 2004, this must last till the very end. COYG!

Banda: The team showed strong defensive discipline and didn't allow Fulham a shot on target. However, the team's attack was flat without Martin Odegaard. All in all, the win keeps Arsenal top of the Premier League and shows they can grind out results even when not at their best.

Terry: Disappointing first half. With this much quality we lacked urgency and the poor passing is not enough going forward. We bought a centre-forward but we are not using his capabilities. There was improvement in the second half but a couple of players disappointed. We got the goal that counted from a set-play, but goals from open play is what is needed. Character showed through but more to come.

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07:00 BST 20 October

Gossip: Arsenal eye St-Etienne youngster



Arsenal and **Tottenham** are among the Premier League clubs interested in St-Etienne's 17-year-old striker Djylian N'Guessan. ([Caught Offside](#))

Want more transfer news? Read Monday's full gossip column

Follow the gossip column on BBC Sport

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10:30 BST 19 October

Watch Premier League highlights and analysis



Pundits Alan Shearer and Micah Richards join host Gabby Logan to bring you the action and talking points from Saturday's Premier League fixtures.

[Watch on BBC iPlayer here](#)

And listen back to full match commentaries on BBC Sounds:

- [Manchester City 2-0 Everton](#)
- [Crystal Palace 3-3 Bournemouth](#)
- [Fulham 0-1 Arsenal](#)

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20:34 BST 18 October

Analysis: Arteta wins at Craven Cottage for first time in two seasons

Alex Howell
Arsenal reporter



Arsenal came into this match on a four-match winning streak and the game against Fulham gave them the chance to build a clear lead at the top of the Premier League for the first time this season.

The Gunners have stumbled in their title challenge in the past two seasons at Craven Cottage with a loss and a draw in their two visits prior to their win today.

There is a different feel around the Arsenal squad this season and with the eight new additions Arsenal made in the summer, Arteta has quality options when things get difficult.

Arteta was able to call on England international Eberechi Eze to take the place of captain Martin Odegaard, and although the midfielder did not have his best game there was not a drop off in quality to the Arsenal team.

Arsenal are well known for their threats from set-pieces and that was the difference in the match - and it will not be the last time a crucial goal comes from the excellent deliveries they produce from Bukayo Saka and Declan Rice.

The Gunners have navigated a difficult start to the season well and now have the chance to build on that good work they have done, with today's win taking their unbeaten run to eight matches in all competitions.

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20:12 BST 18 October

Fulham 0-1 Arsenal: What Arteta and Trossard said



Mikel Arteta spoke to BBC Match of the Day after Arsenal's victory against Fulham: "Never easy. You need to get everyone aligned and up to

speed to come to a difficult place. We didn't win here in the last two seasons. They keep knocking on the door so I'm very happy.

"We gave the ball away a few times. Probably not the best emotional state in the first 15 minutes but we had to overcome that, that's football. Some great saves from them and some misses we had."

On Gabriel: "He is really aggressive, really determined. It's a collective effort. Everyone has their roles and we need to operate them."

On Leandro Trossard: "He's got that intuition to score the goals and that's what we want."

"The players are the options. Some players came in today. Nothing different to other top teams."

Leandro Trossard also spoke to MOTD after Saturday's victory: "Very pleased with that. It was a tough game for us, especially first half the quality on our side wasn't there. We picked it up in the second half. We created some more chances and we're really happy with the win."

On possibly feeling tired after the international break: "I can only speak for myself and I'm feeling really good at the moment. It is a very important win for us again and another clean sheet. We just need to keep going."

"I think everyone is on their toes to help the team - even the players who come on do their job."

"I'm so happy for the team because we work very hard in training."

Did you know?

- This was the first time since November 2003 that Arsenal didn't face a shot on target in successive Premier League games, with the second game on that occasion also against Fulham.
- Arsenal's clean sheet is David Raya's 54th in the Premier League (34 with Arsenal, 20 with Brentford) – it's the outright most since his first season in the competition in 2021-22.



19:36 BST 18 October

Fulham 0-1 Arsenal - send us your thoughts

HAVE YOUR SAY



Whether you were at the game or following from elsewhere, we want to know what you learned.

Have your say on Fulham's performance

What did you make of Arsenal's display?

Come back on Monday for a selection of your replies

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11:29 BST 18 October

Follow Saturday's Premier League games live



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BBC SPORT

On the app? Tap to get news about your club sent to you

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There are seven games in the Premier League on Saturday and BBC Sport will bring you every moment.

- Nottingham Forest v Chelsea (12:30)
- Brighton v Newcastle

- Burnley v Leeds United
- Crystal Palace v Bournemouth
- Man City v Everton - [listen on BBC Radio 5 Live](#)
- Sunderland v Wolves - [listen on BBC Radio 5 Sports Extra](#)
- Fulham v Arsenal (17:30) - [listen on BBC Radio 5 Live](#)

Kick-off times 15:00 BST unless stated

Follow all of the action and reaction here

You can also listen to today's 5 Live Premier League commentaries on most smart speakers. Just say "ask BBC Sounds to play Fulham v Arsenal", for instance.

Find out more about how to listen to Premier League football on BBC Sounds



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11:09 BST 18 October

Sutton's predictions: Fulham v Arsenal



Fulham are no pushovers and they drew this fixture last season, but no-one is stopping Arsenal at the moment.

Martin Odegaard is out injured for a few weeks but it won't make a difference. Their squad depth is so strong and my feeling right now is that they are going to power their way to the title.

Sutton's prediction: 0-2

Read the full predictions and have your say here

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19:44 BST 17 October

Fulham v Arsenal: Key stats and talking points

Matthew Hobbs

BBC Sport journalist

League leaders Arsenal will attempt to extend their lead at the top of the Premier League table as they travel to a Fulham side aiming for a third successive home win.

BBC Sport examines some of the key themes before Saturday's game at Craven Cottage.

Can Arsenal continue winning run?

Arsenal have won their past four games and begin this round of fixtures top of the Premier League and with a run of matches that could give them the opportunity to cement their status as leaders of the competition.

The 2-0 triumph against West Ham last time out was enough to move above Liverpool and the Gunners have lost to just once against Fulham in the past 14 Premier League meetings.

After facing the Cottagers, Arsenal take on Crystal Palace at the Emirates, having lost only one of their last 18 London Premier League derbies, before travelling to promoted Burnley and Sunderland.

Arsenal then host Tottenham, who they have not lost to on home soil in nearly seven years.

Opportunity is knocking for Mikel Arteta's to begin their tilt at a first title since 2004 in earnest, starting with a trip to Craven Cottage.

Fourth time lucky?

The Gunners have finished runners-up in the past three seasons under Arteta and the victory over West Ham on 4 October was his 300th Premier League game at the helm, and his 177th win.

It means the 43-year-old ranks fourth among all English top-flight managers for wins in his opening 300 games with a club. However, Pep Guardiola, Jose Mourinho and Sir Kenny Dalglish had won at least five major trophies by that point, while Arteta's solitary silverware of real significance remains the 2020 FA Cup.

Most wins from first 300 games

As manager of a top-flight English club (all comps)

Manager	Club	Wins	Major trophies won at that point
Pep Guardiola	Manchester City	219	8
Jose Mourinho	Chelsea	196	6
Kenny Dalglish	Liverpool	185	5
Mikel Arteta	Arsenal	177	1

BBC

Arsenal's new emphasis on counter-attack

In order to improve that record, Arsenal have varied their tactics so far this season.

Set-plays and corners are still a super-strength, but Arteta has implemented a greater focus on counter-attacks in order to make his side more robust.

They have recorded 14 phases of counter-attacking play in the Premier League in 2025-26 - the most of any side.

Last term, the Gunners ranked 17th for counter-attacks, with just 47 in the whole of the campaign, and the change in approach has helped Arsenal to restrict their opponents to fewer than 10 shots in their past six Premier League games.

Iwobi Fulham's key player

Fulham, meanwhile, come into this fixture facing the prospect of losing three successive Premier League matches for the first time in nearly three

years, following defeats at **Aston Villa** and **Bournemouth**, conceding three goals on each occasion.

Marco Silva's side, however, remain strong at home and have won their past two league outings at Craven Cottage.

Fulham could avoid losing any of their opening four home matches of a league season for the first time since 2011-12 and Alex Iwobi has been key to their success so far this season.

The former Arsenal midfielder has made eight line-breaking passing into the opposition's penalty area in this season's Premier League, including four which created chances.

Both tallies are second only to **Manchester United's** Bruno Fernandes.

Listen to BBC Radio 5 Live commentary of Fulham v Arsenal at 17:30 BST on Saturday on BBC Sounds

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19:32 BST 18 October

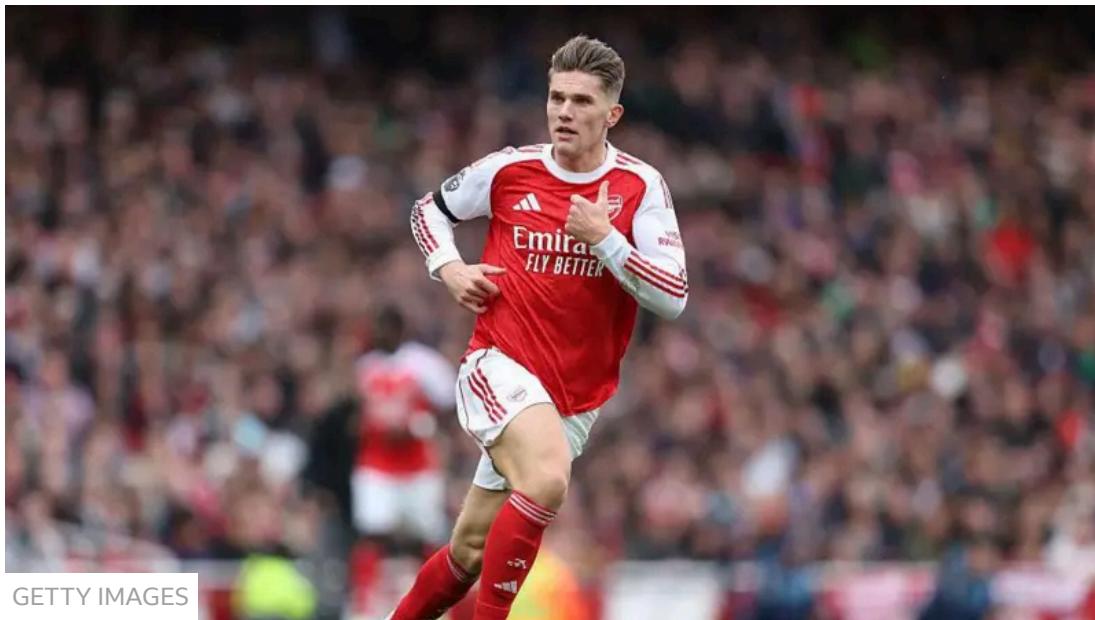
Arsenal top again after Trossard goal sinks Fulham

Premier League ·  933

12:31 BST 17 October

Arteta 'sure it is going to happen' for Gyokeres

Alex Howell
Arsenal reporter



Mikel Arteta has said he is "sure" Viktor Gyokeres will start scoring but said he already told the striker to expect tough times before he signed for the club.

The £64m summer signing has three goals in 10 matches for Arsenal, notching against Leeds and Nottingham Forest.

However, after featuring in both matches for Sweden during the international break without scoring, he has now gone eight games without a goal for club and country.

Despite those figures, Arteta made it clear he is satisfied by what Gyokeres is offering.

"He brings so much to the team," the Arsenal boss said. "Watching the games back, I'm very pleased with what he is bringing."

"I told him, in our first meeting that I want a nine that can handle it when he doesn't score for six or eight games. If not, you have to go somewhere else."

"The pressure is going to be there - the expectation is going to be there. If you put the number nine shirt on for Arsenal, you have to be able to say: 'Six games and I don't score, am I a different player? Do I act in a different way?'

"I want more of the same of what he is doing. When we have the opportunities put it [in the net]. I'm sure it is going to happen."

 Share

11:35 BST 17 October

Arteta on Odegaard absence, Gyokeres' form and 'full gas' Hincapie

Katie Stafford

BBC Sport journalist

Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta has been speaking to the media before Saturday's Premier League game against **Fulham** at Craven Cottage (kick-off 17:30 BST).

Here are the key lines from his news conference:

- There is "no definite date" for Martin Odegaard's return but he will be "out for weeks".
- Arteta said they were managing Ben White and Martin Zubimendi's work load at the beginning of the week but both are available for Saturday's game.
- Piero Hincapie has returned to training and is expected to be part of the matchday squad.
- He said their performances so far this season have been a good platform to build on, but it's now about "consistency" because that's what will give them "a good chance" of achieving their goal.
- On opponents Fulham: "We know it's a really tough place to go. They are a really well coached team and we will have to be at our best."
- He said club captain Odegaard "can push and support" the group off the pitch, but there are "various leaders who have leadership and accountability" in his absence on the field.
- On Viktor Gyokeres, who has not scored in six games, Arteta said: "He brings so much to the team. Watching the games back, I'm very pleased with what he is giving to the team. I want much more of the same. When we have the opportunities to put it in the net, I'm sure it is going to happen. I am really happy with him and have full confidence."
- He said Hincapie's return "will bring a different character and emotion to the team" because of his "aggression and determination." Arteta added: "He is a player that goes full gas to every action, especially in defending. A player that is very clean on the ball."

Follow all of Friday's Premier League news conferences and the rest of the day's football news

Listen to live commentary of Fulham v Arsenal on Radio 5 Live from 17:30 on Saturday

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10:30 BST 17 October

Gyokeres, White & Hincapie on agenda for Arteta conference

Alex Howell
Arsenal reporter



Arsenal take on **Fulham** tomorrow as they get back to Premier League action after the international break.

Mikel Arteta has some team news updates to give with captain Martin Odegaard ruled out for six to eight weeks and Piero Hincapie returning to training after a groin issue.

There are also questions to be asked about Ben White, who was not pictured in training and has had fitness issues this season.

Striker Viktor Gyokeres has not scored for six games for Arsenal and also did not score in his two matches for Sweden.

Arteta said he gave him a hug for his efforts after the last match against **West Ham** but with Kai Havertz still out injured, Arsenal need the striker to start firing.

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12:19 BST 16 October

Hincapie returns to training after injury

Alex Howell
Arsenal reporter



Piero Hincapie is back in training following injury.

The defender picked up the issue after his debut for the club in the win over Athletic Club in the Champions League.

Manager Mikel Arteta revealed the Ecuador international had a groin surgery earlier in the summer while with Bayer Leverkusen and that the 23-year-old had small problem there before the international break.

However, Arteta said he expected Hincapie back available once the window was over and as he is training he looks to be available for selection.

Arteta will give more details about Hincapie's availability at his news conference on Friday morning.

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11:14 BST 16 October

Fulham visit 'the start of a crucial window'

Alex Howell
Arsenal reporter



Arsenal come into this Premier League weekend at the top of the league and having only lost one of their opening 10 games in all competitions.

The Gunners have only conceded three goals too and on Saturday face **Fulham** at Craven Cottage, a place where they have not won on their last two visits.

However, this feels like a different type of Arsenal team and their squad is built to compete in all four competitions this season.

Interestingly, Arsenal actually had one more point at this stage last season and were third in the table.

But the games between October and November international breaks is where last season's title challenge fell apart.

They took two points from a possible 12 meaning **Liverpool** went into the next international window nine ahead.

Arsenal's fixtures are more favourable this season after they had a tough start, but it shows the match against Fulham is the start of a crucial window.

 Share

10:41 BST 16 October

Nine Premier League players on Golden Boy shortlist



GETTY IMAGES

The 25-player shortlist for the Golden Boy award was revealed on Wednesday, with nine players from the Premier League selected.

The award, created by Italian newspaper Tuttosport, is given to the best under-21 footballer each year, with Barcelona forward Lamine Yamal last year's winner.

For a player to be considered for selection in 2025, they must have been born on or after 1 January 2005 and belong to a squad in one of Uefa's top 25 leagues.

Arsenal's Myles Lewis-Skelly and Ethan Nwaneri have both been selected after their breakthrough seasons in 2024-25.

Lewis-Skelly played 40 times across all competitions and also made his England senior debut, while Nwaneri appeared 37 times and scored nine goals.

Chelsea are represented twice, with summer arrivals Estevao, who scored his first goal for the club with a dramatic late winner against Liverpool before the international break, and defender Jorrel Hato making the shortlist.

Tottenham Hotspur also feature, with midfielders Lucas Bergvall and Archie Gray being chosen.

Manchester United defender Leny Yoro, Manchester City full-back Nico O'Reilly and Liverpool centre half Giovanni Leoni - a wildcard choice -

have also been selected.

An international jury of 50 journalists will decide the winner, which will be revealed at a news conference in November.

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09:26 BST 16 October

Timber: Arsenal's new standard-setter at right-back

Karan Vinod
BBC Sport journalist



Arsenal sit top of the Premier League after seven games and while much of the early-season focus has been on their title challenge and defence, Jurrien Timber's influence on the right side of their back four has been just as vital.

The Dutch international, who missed most of his first season with a serious knee injury, has returned, and not only has he re-established himself at Arsenal, but he's elevated the side. His form this season suggests he is now arguably the Premier League's best right-back, particularly in possession and attacking phases.

Data from Opta via FBref shows just how complete his start to the 2025-26 campaign has been. The radar charts compare his percentile rankings against other Premier League full-backs: a measure of how often he outperforms his peers in specific metrics. A percentile of 80, for instance, means he's better than 80% of full-backs in that category.

Defensively, the 24-year-old's numbers reflect the control and composure that have defined Arsenal's start. He ranks high for tackles and interceptions, showing his sharp reading of the game and timing in duels. He's also notably low for errors, a key marker of reliability in a title-challenging team that often dominates possession but must deal with high-risk transitions.

While his aerial numbers are steady rather than spectacular, that's partly a reflection of Arsenal's tactical setup - rarely forced into long, direct duels - rather than a weakness in his game.

Jurrien Timber's defensive stats 2025-26

Percentiles compared with full-backs in the Premier League



Source: Opta via fbref.com

BBC

Jurrien Timber's possession and attacking stats 2025-26

Percentiles compared with full-backs in the Premier League



BBC

Where Timber really separates himself is in the attacking and build-up metrics. The radar graph above shows elite percentile ranks for shot-creating actions (SCA), passes completed, carries into the final third, and key passes.

These figures point to a defender who not only builds play but drives it forward, breaking lines, creating overloads and contributing directly to Arsenal's attacking fluency. His confidence in stepping into midfield mirrors the hybrid full-back role perfected under Mikel Arteta, offering both structure and unpredictability in possession.

The Dutch international's shot-creating actions (actions leading to a shot, such as a progressive pass or dribble) are among the highest for Premier League full-backs, underlining his evolution into a genuine attacking outlet and not just a supporting presence. Hence, he ranks in the 98th percentile for shots on target among full-backs and has helped himself to two Premier League goals already this season.

All of a sudden, you're not only worrying about Bukayo Saka on Arsenal's right-hand side, but Timber too. His overlapping runs and willingness to attack the half-space have forced opposition defences to stretch wider, creating more room for Saka to isolate defenders or drift centrally. It's that dual threat that has made their right flank arguably the most dangerous in the Premier League right now.

It's worth a caveat: we are only seven games into the Premier League season and Arsenal have enjoyed the lion's share of possession in most fixtures. That naturally boosts some of Timber's passing and attacking numbers.

Even so, the consistency and control he has brought in this campaign are undeniable. From his press resistance to his precision in build-up, Timber has become the embodiment of Arteta's blueprint - calm, intelligent, and technically elite.

If he sustains this form, he won't just be a key reason Arsenal stay top. He could be the player who sets the standard for modern full-backs in the Premier League.

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09:04 BST 16 October

What expected goals tell us about the start to the Premier League season

Chris Collinson
BBC Sport statistician



The Premier League table is starting to take shape and while results are obviously what matter most, they don't tell the whole story in terms of how teams have been playing so far.

Expected goals (xG) tells us how much teams have been dominating games by creating lots of good chances up front and restricting opponents to few, bad ones at the back.

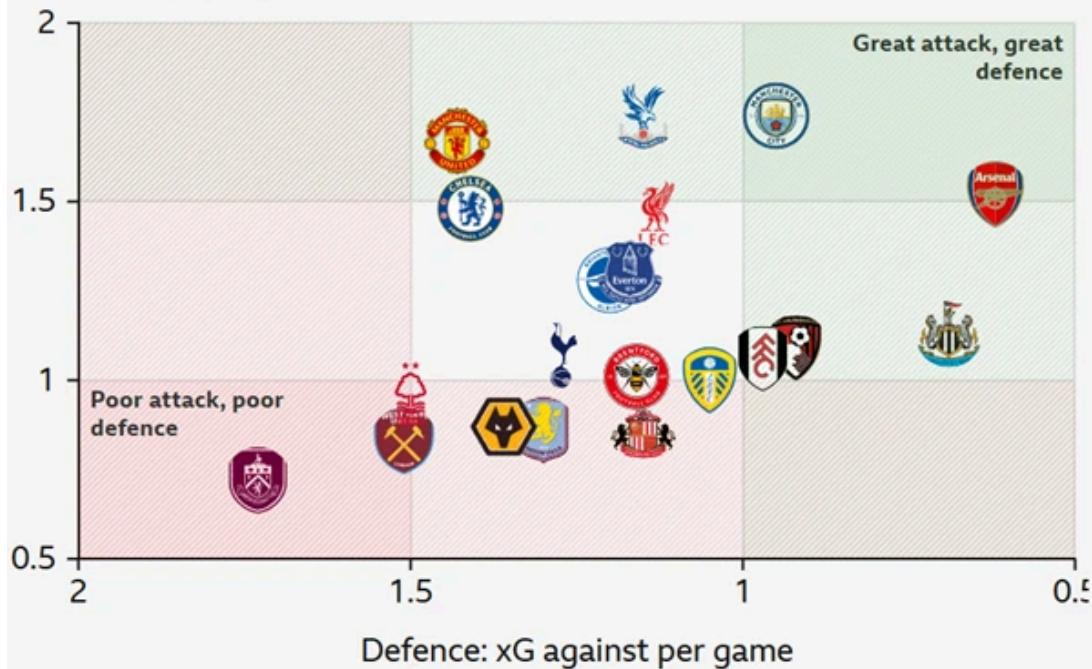
Penalties are excluded because they distort a team's numbers on how threatening or vulnerable they are in general, especially at this early stage.

Below is a graphic showing how good teams have been in attack and defence, with the most dominant teams in the top-right corner and the least impressive in the bottom-left corner.

Arsenal and Man City have been the two best teams so far

Expected goals - Premier League this season

Attack: xG per game



Source: Opta • excluding penalties
Touch badges for team stats and rankings

BBC

Arsenal and Manchester City have been the most dominant sides, with the Gunners having the best defence and fourth-best attack and City the joint-best attack and fourth-best defence.

High-flying Crystal Palace are the only side to rival City's attacking threat, while Newcastle are living up to their name by being almost as impregnable at the back as Arsenal.

Both Manchester United and Chelsea have one of the top five attacks in the league but worryingly also rank in the bottom five defensively.

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Liverpool's back-to-back defeats following five straight wins gives a more accurate picture of how they have been playing, while Tottenham have needed to be very efficient to make up for their lack of dominance in games.

Aston Villa's early-season struggles are no longer to do with finishing - they have now scored six non-penalty goals from an xG of 6.0 - but simply because they have not been playing well.

While promoted sides Leeds and Sunderland have adapted quite well to the top-flight, Burnley have struggled to make the jump so far with both

the worst attack and the worst defence.

Read more on what expected goals tell us about the start to the season

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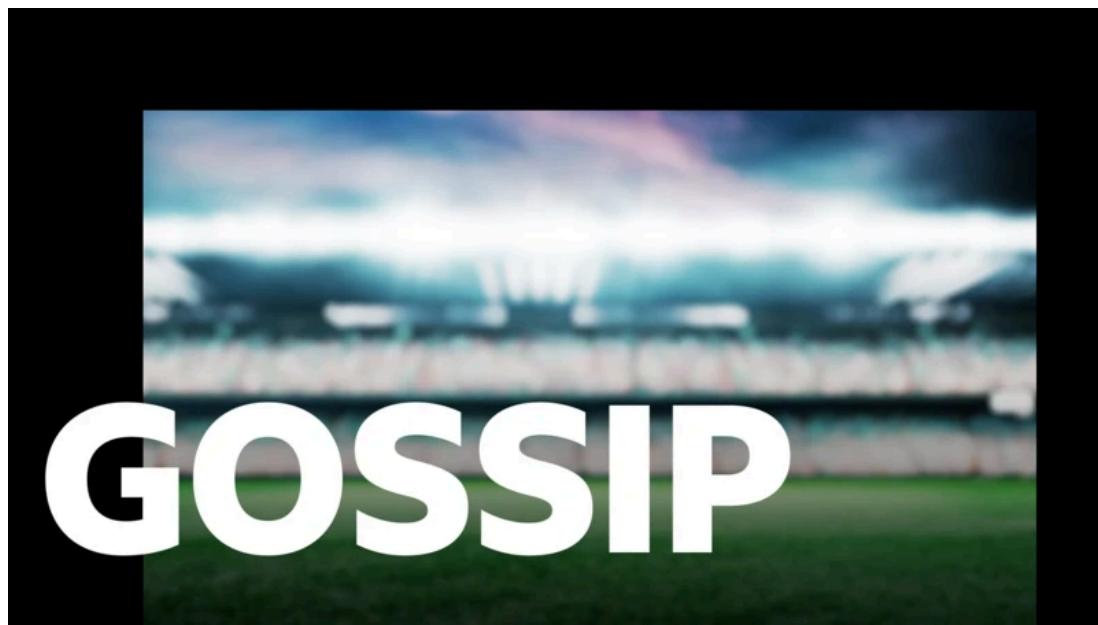
08:41 BST 16 October

Still no Salah but make room for Eze - FPL team of the week

Football ·  69

07:57 BST 16 October

Gossip: Gunners keen on Juventus duo



Turkey forward Kenan Yildiz continues to push for an improved contract at Juventus but with talks yet to bear fruit, clubs including [Chelsea](#), Arsenal and Barcelona are keeping a close eye on the 20-year-old.

(Gazzetta dello Sport - in Italian)

Juventus have rebuffed multiple enquiries for France defensive midfielder Khephren Thuram, 24, from Premier League clubs including Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool during the past six months. [**\(TBR Football\)**](#)

Want more transfer stories? Read Thursday's full gossip column

[**Follow the gossip column on BBC Sport**](#)

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14:18 BST 15 October

'Can they do it on a mild October night in Fulham?'

Laura Kirk-Francis

Fan writer

FAN'S VOICE



GETTY IMAGES

When the fixture list was released back in June, many Arsenal fans looked at the first few weeks in horror.

An away trip to Old Trafford on the first day of the season, followed by visits to Anfield and St James' Park - all before the start of October.

With such a brutal opening run of games, Arsenal could have been out of the title race before it had even started.

Fast forward to now and you would struggle to find a fan not impressed with how the Gunners have dealt with this difficult start. Sixteen points from a possible 21 and only three goals conceded. Arsenal have more than weathered the storm.

Attention now turns to what looks - on paper - like a kinder run of fixtures. But there is still reason to be cautious.

Arsenal's undoing last term came from dropping points against the exact teams they face in their next three games.

At Craven Cottage, last December Mikel Arteta's side could only manage a draw against **Fulham**, who are their next Premier League opponents.

Two 1-1 draws with **Brighton**, who they face next in the EFL Cup, saw the Gunners lose valuable ground on **Liverpool**. Then, the 2-2 draw against **Crystal Palace** all but handed the league title to the Reds in the spring.

Arsenal can clearly get up for big games. But the true test of the team's improvement since last campaign will come over the coming weeks, including navigating the Champions League visit of Atletico Madrid and a trip to Slavia Prague.

Arteta has clearly answered his critics when it comes to registering wins against the 'big six'. The defeat at Anfield was the first time Arsenal had lost to such a side since April 2023.

The question is now: can they do it on a mild October night in Fulham?

Find more from Laura Kirk-Francis at the [Latte Firm podcast](#)

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14:17 BST 15 October

Arsenal's 'finishers' proving effective

Tyrese King
BBC Sport journalist



The impact sub changes the course of a game.

There were times last season when Mikel Arteta, in Arsenal's second consecutive title race, would look to a depleted bench in hard times and options would be found lacking.

They relied on set-pieces, but after a summer of reinforcement in attacking areas - including Noni Madueke and Eberechi Eze - it is a player whose future has been a hot topic who is proving to be one of the Gunners' most clinical attackers.

Gabriel Martinelli was voted Arsenal's player of the month for September because of two standout moments.

It took the 24-year-old just 37 seconds to come off the bench and score the opener against Athletic Club in the Champions League, and he then provided the assist for the goal by Leandro Trossard - another of Arsenal's 'finishers' - that sealed the 2-0 victory. And fellow sub Trossard had laid on the first goal for his team-mate.

Only four Premier League players have contributed three or more goals and assists from the bench this season in all competitions, and Martinelli and Trossard are two of them.

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Most goal involvements as a substitute

PL players in all competitions this season

	Goals	Assists	Goals & assists
Leandro Trossard, Arsenal	2	2	4
Stefanos Tzimas, Brighton	2	2	4
Gabriel Martinelli, Arsenal	2	1	3
Rayan Cherki, Man City	2	1	3

Source: Opta

BBC

When speaking about the mentality of the players left on the bench, Arteta has said: "They are at least equally important, or more important. We have discussed that.

"The finishers are going to be more important this season sometimes than the starters."

Finishers or game-changers are a concept taken from rugby union to describe players who start the match on the bench.

Though Trossard tops the list of goal contributions above, Martinelli's so far have arguably been more memorable and in big-game moments.

As well as his assist and late goal in Bilbao, the Belgian laid on the third goal in a routine 3-0 win over **Nottingham Forest** and scored the second late on in the 2-0 victory at **Port Vale** in the Carabao Cup.

Martinelli's other crucial moment as a sub, however, came against **Manchester City** in the Premier League, rescuing what could prove to be a huge point in injury time.

The superb, lofted finish after a ball over the top ended a move that took advantage of the space behind City's defensive line with Martinelli's direct running.

This perhaps highlights a key reason for the success of Martinelli being deployed largely in the latter stages of matches: he can be at his best when the game is opened up. Transitions are more frequent and there is often more opportunity to catch opponent on the break, which is how his goals off the bench this season have come about.

Martinelli has only started two of the Gunners' seven Premier League games so far this season - both in August against **Manchester United** and

Liverpool - but has been introduced as a substitute in four of the other five.

He also featured from the outset against Port Vale in the Carabao Cup third round and started - and scored the opener - in the home Champions League win over Olympiacos.

Additional data collection and visualisation by Jordan Butler

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