

= 2004 ? 05 Arsenal F.C. season =

The 2004 ? 05 season was the 107th season of competitive football played by Arsenal . The club ended the campaign as FA Cup winners , but failed to retain their Premier League title as they finished second to Chelsea . In the UEFA Champions League , Arsenal made an exit in the knockout stages to Bayern Munich .

In the transfer window Arsenal purchased goalkeeper Manuel Almunia , who initially served a backup to Jens Lehmann , and midfielder Mathieu Flamini . The club kept hold of its captain Patrick Vieira after much transfer speculation over his expected move to Real Madrid . Several players left Arsenal before the campaign got under way ; defender Martin Keown left to play for Leicester City , Ray Parlour joined Middlesbrough while Sylvain Wiltord signed for Lyon .

Arsenal began the season in good form and equalled Nottingham Forest 's unbeaten league run of 42 matches against Middlesbrough . The team set a new English division record and went a further seven games unbeaten before losing to Manchester United in controversial circumstances . Arsenal 's form suffered as a result and defensive shortcomings became more apparent ; two draws and a defeat in November reinforced Chelsea 's position at the top of the table , where they remained for the rest of the season . At home to Crystal Palace in February 2005 , Wenger named an Arsenal squad with no English players ? a first in the club 's history which attracted criticism from the media . The team ended the season strongly , with a run of eight wins from nine games ensuring a second @-@ place finish . 32 different players represented the club in five competitions and there were 15 different goalscorers . Arsenal 's top goalscorer was Thierry Henry , who scored 30 goals in 42 games .

= = Background = =

Arsenal ended the previous season as league champions , becoming the first side since Preston North End 115 years earlier to do so undefeated . They completed their historic league campaign with 26 wins , 12 draws and 90 points .

By the end of January 2004 Arsenal were still in the hunt for all four trophies , but suffered setbacks in each of the cup competitions ; they were unable to retain the FA Cup , losing out to eventual winners Manchester United in the semi @-@ finals and days later were knocked out of the UEFA Champions League by Chelsea at the quarter @-@ final stage . They exited the League Cup after defeat to Middlesbrough in early February .

= = = Transfers = = =

In  
Out

= = Pre @-@ season = =

= = FA Community Shield = =

The 2004 edition of the FA Community Shield , was contested between Manchester United and Arsenal at the Millennium Stadium on 8 August . Cesc Fàbregas started alongside Gilberto Silva in midfield for Arsenal as Vieira was absent , while Thierry Henry partnered Dennis Bergkamp up front . After a goalless first half , Arsenal took the lead when Gilberto scored in the 50th minute . Manchester United equalised through Alan Smith five minutes after , but José Antonio Reyes restored Arsenal 's advantage two minutes before the hour mark . Mikaël Silvestre scored an own goal 11 minutes before the end to give Arsenal a 3 ? 1 victory . Wenger praised Fàbregas 's performance after the match , describing the midfielder as a " complete player " and reiterated his desire to keep Vieira .

= = Premier League = =

A total of 20 teams competed in the Premier League in the 2004 ? 05 season . Each team played 38 matches ; two against every other team and one match at each club 's stadium . Three points were awarded for each win , one point per draw , and none for defeats . At the end of the season the top two teams qualified for the group stages of the UEFA Champions League ; teams in third and fourth needed to play a qualifier . The provisional fixture list was released on 24 June 2004 , but was subject to change in the event of clashes with other competitions , international football , inclement weather , or matches being selected for television coverage .

= = = August ? October = = =

Arsenal began their defence of the league title against Everton on 15 August 2004 . Fàbregas was named in the first eleven ; at 17 years 103 days he became the club 's youngest ever Premier League player . It was Bergkamp on his 500th league appearance who opened the scoring for Arsenal and Reyes made it 2 ? 0 , heading the ball in from Fredrik Ljungberg 's cross . Ljungberg added a third goal in the second half and in spite of the team conceding moments after , Robert Pirès scored Arsenal 's fourth in the 83rd minute . Shortly before the kick @-@ off at home to Middlesbrough the following weekend , the club was presented a golden replica of the Premier League trophy , to commemorate their unbeaten season . In the match , Henry gave Arsenal the lead , which was cancelled out before half time by Joseph @-@ Désiré Job 's goal @-@ bound effort . Four minutes after the interval , Franck Queudrue exploited an error from defender Pascal Cygan and in turn passed the ball to Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink , who " finish [ ed ] with perfect brutality " . Queudrue scored to put Middlesbrough 3 ? 1 up in the 53rd minute , but Bergkamp replied with a goal for Arsenal a minute later . The home team completed the comeback with further goals by Reyes , Pirès and Henry . Wenger afterwards admitted Arsenal 's defending was poor , but said their attacking threat made up for their deficiencies . The 5 ? 3 win meant Arsenal equalled Nottingham Forest 's record of 42 league matches undefeated . Three days later , the team beat Blackburn Rovers 3 ? 0 to set a new record . Arsenal at the end of the month travelled to Norwich City , where three first half goals set the team on the way to a 4 ? 1 victory . The win ended Norwich 's eight @-@ month undefeated record at Carrow Road .

Due to international fixtures , Arsenal did not play another game for two weeks . On the resumption of club football , they travelled across London to face Fulham . Vieira made his return to the first team in place of Fàbregas . Fulham was awarded a penalty in the first half , after Ashley Cole brought down striker Andy Cole in the penalty area . Referee Mark Halsey however changed his mind after protests from the Arsenal players and a consultation with his assistant ; the game was restarted with a dropped @-@ ball . Arsenal scored three times in the second half and ended the weekend of 6 September 2004 top of the league table , two points clear of second place Chelsea . The league champions dropped their first points of the season at home to Bolton Wanderers . At the City of Manchester Stadium on 25 September 2004 , a goal by Cole earned Arsenal a 1 ? 0 win against Manchester City . Journalist Russell Thomas , writing for The Guardian , commented on Arsenal 's fatigue during the second half and opined that the team needed to keep their focus against sterner opposition .

Arsenal beat Charlton Athletic in early October to extend their unbeaten run to 48 league matches . Charlton manager Alan Curbishley said of his opponents : " The gulf between Arsenal and the rest of the Premier League means that the rest have got it all to do to try and stop them , and I 'm including the big three or four . " Two goals from Pirès and one from Henry ensured a 3 ? 1 win against Aston Villa , who had led the game early on . Attention soon turned to Arsenal 's trip to face Manchester United . The champions were looking to go half a century of league games unbeaten , whereas the home team ? in transition , attempted to push on for a title challenge . In the match , a challenge by Sol Campbell on Wayne Rooney earned Manchester United a penalty , converted by Ruud van Nistelrooy in the 73rd minute . Rooney then scored United 's second goal of the match to

end Arsenal's unbeaten run on 49 games . Tempers boiled over in the players' tunnel , where pizza was thrown at Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson . When speaking to the media , a distraught Wenger told reporters that Rooney dived to win the penalty and criticised the refereeing performance of Mike Riley . He was later found guilty of insinuating that Van Nistelrooy was a cheat , and fined £ 15 @, @ 000 by the FA .

The final match of October was against Southampton at Highbury . Henry who missed a penalty early on , scored to put Arsenal in front in the 67th minute . Southampton replied with two goals from Rory Delap , but Van Persie in stoppage time equalised for the home team with a curling shot . The draw meant Arsenal stood in first position and had accumulated 26 points . The team were level on points with Chelsea , with a marginally better goal difference .

= = = November ? December = = =

For the second league game in succession , Arsenal dropped two points . The team drew 1 ? 1 at Crystal Palace on 6 November 2004 , which meant Chelsea overtook them in first position . Wenger rued Arsenal's inability to hold onto leads in matches and admitted the fluency had disappeared in their football , possibly because of the manner in which they lost the unbeaten record . A week later Arsenal faced Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane . It was Tottenham who began the match the better of the two teams and took the lead after 36 minutes when Nouredine Naybet scored . Henry equalised for Arsenal moments before half @-@ time , and the champions went in front after Lauren converted a penalty . Vieira scored on the hour mark to make it 3 ? 1 , before Jermain Defoe replied for Tottenham instantly with a " wonderful , dipping finish into the top corner . " Fàbregas created Arsenal's fourth goal , scored by Ljungberg . In the final 16 minutes Tottenham scored twice and Arsenal once ; the final score was 5 ? 4 , making it the highest scoring North London derby . Arsenal's defending was ridiculed by Chelsea manager José Mourinho , who told reporters : " Five @-@ four is a hockey score , not a football score . "

Arsenal only managed a draw against West Bromwich Albion on 20 November 2004 ; Robert Earnshaw's goal with 11 minutes remaining of normal time cancelled out Pirès's opener . Arsenal lost their final match of November , away to Liverpool at Anfield . Vieira finished off a one @-@ touch move to equalise for Arsenal ? who were behind in the first half ? but Neil Mellor scored the winning goal of the game , shooting from long range . Football pundit Alan Hansen in his analysis on Match of the Day criticised the temperament of Arsenal's players and questioned their desire : " When you have success , sometimes it isn't there and you have to dig in with great determination and hard work , and at the moment they are not doing that . When you look at their two big players , Henry and Vieira , [ you think they ] must do better in future . " Arsenal ended the month in second , five points behind leaders Chelsea .

Henry scored two late goals in Arsenal's victory over Birmingham City on 4 December 2004 . Wenger replaced Lehmann in goal with Almunia , who made his league debut . Arsenal then faced league leaders Chelsea at Highbury ; the match was billed as " Judgement Day " by Sky Sports . With Vieira suspended and Gilberto and Edu injured , Wenger picked Flamini to partner Fabregas in midfield . The first chance of the match went to Henry , who scored inside 75 seconds . John Terry levelled the score , but Henry restored Arsenal's lead from a contentious free @-@ kick ? Graham Poll allowed the striker to take it quickly without warning the Chelsea players . Eiður Guðjohnsen equalised early in the second half for Chelsea , and late on Henry missed a chance to score a hat @-@ trick . There were no further goals and the match ended 2 ? 2 , meaning Chelsea remained five points clear of Arsenal . Wenger said he was disappointed in the manner his team conceded to Chelsea ? from two set pieces , but added : " I thought we did really well , and it was important for us to come back to the level we want to be at . "

Arsenal won their remaining games in December and conceded no goals . They beat Portsmouth courtesy of a Campbell goal in the second half , and on Boxing Day defeated Fulham by two goals . Vieira scored the winning goal against Newcastle United , a volley that deflected over goalkeeper Shay Given . After 20 games Arsenal accumulated 44 points and lay second in the league table .

== January ? February ==

On New Year 's Day , Ljungberg scored two goals in Arsenal 's 3 ? 1 win against Charlton Athletic . The team four days later drew at home to Manchester City . Arsenal lost further ground to Chelsea after defeat to Bolton Wanderers at the Reebok Stadium . Wenger conceded that Chelsea were favourites to win the league because of their point advantage , but added : " We will keep going and fight until the last minute of the championship . " Arsenal ended January with a 1 ? 0 home win against Newcastle United . Wenger made four changes from the Bolton defeat , with Bergkamp the match scorer coming in place of Van Persie .

The first night of February saw Arsenal host Manchester United at Highbury . In the tunnel before the match Roy Keane was seen confronting Vieira ; the United captain accused him of intimidating his teammate Gary Neville . Vieira scored after eight minutes , but Giggs equalised for Manchester United 10 minutes later . Bergkamp restored Arsenal 's advantage nine minutes before half time , but two goals by Cristiano Ronaldo and one by John O 'Shea in the second half gave United a 4 ? 2 win . It was Arsenal 's fourth league defeat of the season and moved them down to third spot , overtaken by their opponents . Wenger ruled his team out of the title race and refused to blame Almunia for his error in Ronaldo 's first goal . The goalkeeper was dropped in Arsenal 's next game , away to Aston Villa . Three first half goals by Ljungberg , Henry and Cole gave Arsenal a comfortable win .

For the match against Crystal Palace on 14 February 2005 , Wenger named an Arsenal squad that did not feature a single British player ? a first in the club 's history . The team did not get off to the best of starts with Lehmann miskicking a back pass and Vieira losing possession routinely , but grew as the game went on and scored three goals in seven minutes . On his 200th league appearance , Henry scored in either half , with the result 5 ? 1 to Arsenal . The result was somewhat overshadowed by the foreign makeup of the team ; former player Paul Merson called it a " joke " and PFA chairman Gordon Taylor noted it was a " worrying pattern for English football . " When asked about his team selections , Wenger said : " I don 't look at the passport of people , I look at their quality and their attitude . "

Arsenal only earned a point at Southampton , where Van Persie was sent off for a late challenge on Graeme Le Saux . The team remained in third at the end of February , four points behind Manchester United and 10 behind leaders Chelsea , who played a game less than both challengers .

== March ? May ==

Arsenal 's form improved as the season drew to a close . At home to Portsmouth on 5 March 2005 , the team earned three points courtesy of Henry 's hat @-@ trick . Van Persie scored the only goal in Arsenal 's match against Blackburn Rovers and the team moved back to second position with a home win against Norwich City ? Henry scored another hat @-@ trick . A week later Pirès 's goal was enough for Arsenal to beat Middlesbrough at the Riverside Stadium and win their fourth consecutive match . The team then played out a goalless draw against Chelsea , who were on course to become champions ; Wenger congratulated his opponents on their season and felt Arsenal needed to score first so that they could " force them to come out from the back . "

Arsenal defeated Tottenham 1 ? 0 on 25 April 2005 , which meant Chelsea needed to wait on Saturday in order to mathematically win the title . Second position was the best Arsenal could aim for by the time they faced West Bromwich Albion on 2 May 2005 . Goals from Van Persie and Edu earned a 2 ? 0 win for the team and Arsenal beat Champions League finalists Liverpool at Highbury to all @-@ but secure second spot . Arsenal recorded the biggest win of the league season , against Everton at Highbury . An inspired performance by Bergkamp helped the team win 7 ? 0 ; he created the opening two goals and scored in the second half . Arsenal lost their final game of the campaign , away to Birmingham City . It was a lacklustre performance by the visitors , who equalised through Bergkamp after going a goal behind , but conceded in the 90th minute .

== Matches ==

== Classification ==

Source :