

= 2003 FA Cup Final =

The 2003 FA Cup Final was the 122nd final of the FA Cup , the world 's oldest domestic football cup competition . The final took place on Saturday 17 May 2003 at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff , in front of a crowd of 73 @, @ 726 . It was the third consecutive year the final was played at the stadium , due to the ongoing reconstruction of Wembley Stadium , the final 's usual venue . The 2003 final was the first to be played indoors ; the roof was closed because of bad weather . The clubs contesting the final were Arsenal , the holders of the competition and Southampton . This was Arsenal 's sixteenth appearance in a final to Southampton 's fourth .

As Premier League clubs , Arsenal and Southampton entered the FA Cup in the third round , which meant each club needed to progress through five rounds to reach the final . Arsenal made a convincing start , they won their opening three rounds , but needed a sixth @-@ round replay against Chelsea . By contrast , Southampton played one replay in the fourth round against Millwall . Arsenal entered the match as favourites and beat Southampton 6 ? 1 nine days earlier in the league . Goalkeeper David Seaman captained Arsenal in the absence of the injured Patrick Vieira ; it was to be Seaman 's last appearance for the club . In defence for Southampton , Chris Baird made only his second competitive start . Chris Marsden captained the club in the absence of the injured club captain , Jason Dodd .

Arsenal began the match more effectively of the two and scored what proved to be the winning goal in the latter minutes of the first half ? Freddie Ljungberg 's rebounded goal effort was converted by Robert Pirès . Midway through the second half , Southampton goalkeeper Antti Niemi was substituted , as he strained his calf muscle ; he was replaced by Paul Jones . In stoppage time , striker James Beattie had his header cleared off the line by Ashley Cole , in what was the final chance for Southampton .

Arsenal 's win marked the first time a team had retained the trophy since Tottenham Hotspur in 1982 . They later played against league champions Manchester United in the 2003 FA Community Shield . Given Arsenal had already qualified for Europe via their league position , their UEFA Cup spot was awarded to runners @-@ up Southampton .

= = Route to the final = =

= = = Arsenal = = =

Arsenal entered the competition in the third round , receiving a bye as a Premier League club . Their opening match was a 2 ? 0 home win against Oxford United on 4 January 2003 . Striker Dennis Bergkamp scored his 100th goal for the club and an own goal by defender Scott McNiven ensured progression to the next round . Arsenal faced non @-@ league side Farnborough Town ; the match switched from Farnborough 's ground at Cherrywood Road to Highbury due to concerns over safety . Farnborough began the match as the home team and conceded the first goal , scored by Arsenal defender Sol Campbell in the 19th minute . They went down to ten men after Christian Lee was sent off for a professional foul . Francis Jeffers scored twice before Rocky Baptiste added a consolation , beating Pascal Cygan for pace and despite having his first shot saved by goalkeeper Stuart Taylor , he managed to lift the ball over him and into the net . Lauren and Bergkamp each scored in the final 15 minutes to give Arsenal a 5 ? 1 victory .

Arsenal 's fifth round match was away to league rivals Manchester United at Old Trafford on 16 February 2003 . After Ryan Giggs missed the chance to score past an open goal , midfielder Edu gave Arsenal the lead through a free kick which took a deflection off David Beckham 's shoulder . Striker Sylvain Wiltord scored the second goal of the match in the 52nd minute , running onto a pass from Edu and side @-@ footing the ball past goalkeeper Fabien Barthez . Arsenal captain Patrick Vieira said of the performance : " We knew when we lost here in the league that we had lost the battle in midfield . We had to put that right , and we did . " In the sixth round , Arsenal was drawn at home to Chelsea in a repeat of the previous season 's final . Chelsea defender John Terry put

Chelsea ahead with a header from a set piece before Arsenal responded through Jeffers and Thierry Henry . Frank Lampard scored a late equaliser for the visiting team meaning the match was replayed at Stamford Bridge . An own goal by Terry and a strike by Wiltord in the space of seven minutes during the replay gave Arsenal an early lead against Chelsea . Despite going down to ten men after Cygan was sent off and Terry scoring from a header , the away team scored a third goal through Lauren to ensure progression into the semi @-@ finals . In the semi @-@ final against Sheffield United on 13 April 2003 at Old Trafford , Freddie Ljungberg scored the winning goal to help Arsenal reach their third successive FA Cup final appearance . The match was best remembered for David Seaman 's late save , which prevented Sheffield United from equalising .

= = = Southampton = = =

Like Arsenal , as a Premier League club , Southampton received a bye into the third round . Their opening match was a 4 ? 0 win against fellow league club Tottenham Hotspur . A goal by defender Michael Svensson and three from Jo Tessem , Anders Svensson and James Beattie in the second half was the second straight victory against Tottenham , having beaten them on New Year 's Day in the league . In the fourth round , Southampton was drawn at home to First Division club Millwall on 25 January 2003 . The visitors took the lead through striker Steve Claridge but were denied victory 90 seconds from the end of the match as Southampton striker Kevin Davies scored from a rebounded shot . In the replay , midfielder Matthew Oakley scored twice for Southampton (one in both halves) after Steven Reid equalised for Millwall .

Southampton 's fifth round match was against Norwich City at home on 5 February 2003 . Two goals in the space of three minutes , scored by Svensson and Tessem was enough to take the team into the quarter @-@ finals . Southampton defender Claus Lundekvam was pleased with the win and said following the match : " When you get to this stage in the competition you have to believe you can win it . " The club then faced Wolverhampton Wanderers at home in the following round . Former Wolves player Chris Marsden gave Southampton the lead in the 56th minute and with nine minutes remaining of normal time , the team added a second goal when Tessem 's shot took a deflection off Paul Butler 's legs to go inside the goal net . The victory meant Southampton reached the semi @-@ finals of the FA Cup for the first time in 17 years . At Villa Park , Southampton played First Division team Watford on 13 April 2003 . Brett Ormerod opened the scoring two minutes before half time and set up the second goal which the ball was taken over the line by Watford defender Paul Robinson . Despite Marcus Gayle scoring a late header to half the scoreline Southampton won the match .

= = Pre @-@ match = =

Arsenal was appearing in the final of the FA Cup for the sixteenth time . They had won the cup eight times previously (in 1930 , 1936 , 1950 , 1971 , 1979 , 1993 , 1998 and 2002) and had been beaten in the final seven times , the most recent in 2001 . By comparison , Southampton made their fourth appearance in a FA Cup final . Their previous best was winning the cup in 1976 , by beating opponents Manchester United .

Both clubs received an allocation of approximately 25 @,@ 000 tickets , with the remaining 25 @,@ 000 being sent out to other clubs . 17 @,@ 500 of those tickets were available to Southampton season ticket holders . Seat prices for the final exceeded £ 80 , with the cheapest tickets available at £ 25 . Southampton was given the South Stand , which was the larger end of the stadium , whereas Arsenal was situated at the opposite end . Although Southampton supporters were disappointed at the allocation share , chairman Rupert Lowe refused to criticise the FA 's decision , by saying : " The reality is that too many people want to go and there are never enough tickets . " In the lead up to the final , the South Wales Echo reported that many tickets were being sold on the black market , for " 20 times " the face @-@ value price .

Nine days before the final , the two clubs faced each other in a league match at Highbury . With Arsenal unable to retain the title , having lost to Leeds United , manager Arsène Wenger rested

several players , as did Southampton manager Gordon Strachan , whose team started without six of their first @-@ choice eleven . Winger Jermaine Pennant on his league debut scored a hat @-@ trick , as did Pirès , in a 6 ? 1 win . Strachan believed the result had little bearing on their chances of winning the cup , noting : " There is little pressure on Southampton to lift the trophy . We were not expected to reach the final and have already clinched a place in the UEFA Cup . " Wenger accepted his team were " favourites " but expected " ... Southampton to be at their best against us because it will be a different team than the one we faced in the championship recently . "

The traditional Cup Final hymn , " Abide with Me " was sung by Tony Henry , an opera singer from South London . Sir Bobby Robson was invited as the FA 's chief guest for the final and performed several duties ordinarily reserved for royalty , such as presenting the trophy to the winning captain . Heavy rain on Friday night and forecasted showers in Cardiff meant the final would be the first to be played indoors ; the stadium closed its retractable roof and floodlights were used to light up the ground .

= = Match = =

= = = Team selection = = =

Vieira was ruled out of the match because of a knee injury , so Seaman was named as Arsenal captain , in a match widely anticipated as his final for the club . With Campbell suspended and Cygan absent due to a thigh strain , Daily Mail journalists Steve Curry and Ian Gibb revealed the night before the final that midfielder Kolo Touré was pencilled in as an " emergency centre back " . Wenger however picked Oleg Luzhny to pair up with Martin Keown , who was rested the previous Sunday away to Sunderland . For Southampton , the major absentee was striker Marian Pahars , who underwent a third operation to overcome a troubling knee injury . Defender Chris Baird made his second competitive start for the club and Chris Marsden captained Southampton , given Jason Dodd 's absence with an injury . Although both teams set up in a 4 ? 4 ? 2 formation , Bergkamp was positioned as a deep @-@ lying forward behind Henry .

= = = Report = = =

Arsenal created their first chance inside 24 seconds , when Ljungberg put Henry clear down the right @-@ hand side . The striker used his pace to get the better of Lundekvam , only to have his shot blocked by goalkeeper Antti Niemi . Bergkamp 's goal effort in the eighth minute was cleared off the line by full back Chris Baird , after Niemi fumbled Henry 's initial shot . Southampton fashioned their first opportunity in the 15th minute through a high cross ; in spite of unsettling the Arsenal defence , the unmarked Svensson volleyed over the bar . Baird moments after won the ball in midfield and curled a shot that left Seaman " scrambling across his goal to save " . Seven minutes before the break , Arsenal went into the lead . Henry , receiving the ball from Parlour , slipped it into Bergkamp down the right . He in turn fed the ball to Ljungberg , whose shot was blocked . The ball rebounded in the direction of Pirès , who needed one touch to set himself and another to fire at the near post , despite Niemi getting a hand . Arsenal missed further chances to extend their lead when a cross from the right by Henry was shot over the bar by Pirès and from the same area , Bergkamp 's " cross @-@ cum @-@ shot " was missed by Ljungberg .

After the break , Southampton applied pressure and a poor clearance by Seaman invited a chance for Paul Telfer to shoot from " 35 yards out " ; his pass found Ormerod , but was eventually intercepted by Luzhny . Minutes after , Beattie failed to take advantage from Oakley 's cross , as the ball drifted wide . Arsenal regained possession and in the 52nd minute went close to doubling their lead . In Southampton 's penalty box , Bergkamp turned and beat Ormerod before curling a shot which Niemi palmed off ; it fell to the feet of Ljungberg , who shot the ball into the side @-@ netting . Telfer misguided his header from a Southampton corner , before Niemi denied Henry again . In the 65th minute , Niemi injured himself , in an attempt to clear the ball and was replaced by substitute

Paul Jones . Both clubs made substitutions in the final third of the game , with Wiltord coming on for Bergkamp and Tessems replacing Svensson . Ormerod 's goal @-@ bound effort was saved by Seaman with 10 minutes remaining of the match . In the fourth minute of injury time , Southampton earned themselves a corner . Beattie 's on @-@ target header was cleared off the line by Ashley Cole and out for another corner , which Pirès kicked out in the final action of the game .

= = = Details = = =

= = = Statistics = = =

= = Post @-@ match = =

In retaining the cup , Arsenal became the first team to do so since Tottenham Hotspur in 1982 . Wenger commented after the game that his team " got the trophy we wanted " while Strachan was in admiration of Southampton 's performance : " I 'm very proud of the way they competed . I couldn 't have asked for any more . " Keown said the FA Cup win was " the best ever " and Seaman felt the disappointment of losing out to Manchester United in the league spurred the team on . Football pundits Alan Hansen , Peter Schmeichel and Mark Hughes unanimously agreed that Arsenal deserved to win the match .

Arsenal 's victory set up a Community Shield match against Manchester United , winners of the 2002 ? 03 Premier League . The FA Cup winners are awarded qualification into the UEFA Cup , but because Arsenal qualified for the UEFA Champions League via their league position , the UEFA Cup place was passed to Southampton , the runners @-@ up .

The match was broadcast live in the United Kingdom by both the BBC and Sky Sports , with BBC One providing the free @-@ to @-@ air coverage and Sky Sports 1 being the pay @-@ TV alternative . BBC One held the majority of the viewership , with a peak audience of 9 @.@ 6 million viewers (55 @.@ 7 % viewing share) watching at 16 : 50pm and the match averaged at 8 @.@ 3 million (55 %) ? the highest audience for a FA Cup final in four years . Coverage of the final began on the channel at 12 : 10pm and averaged 5 @.@ 3 million (44 @.@ 4 %) . The Match of the Day coverage concluded at different times dependent on station , with the broadcast in Scotland ending 10 minutes before the main broadcast finished .