

= 2005 ? 06 Arsenal F.C. season =

The 2005 ? 06 season was the 108th season of competitive football played by Arsenal . It was the final season in which home matches were played at the club 's Highbury stadium after 93 years ; Arsenal intended to move to its new 60 @, @ 000 capacity Emirates Stadium in time for the following season . The club ended their Premier League campaign in fourth , having pipped local rivals Tottenham Hotspur to the position on the final day . Arsenal became the first London club to reach a UEFA Champions League final , though lost 2 ? 1 to Barcelona in Paris . In the League Cup the club was eliminated in the semi @-@ finals on aggregate score by Wigan Athletic and knocked out of the FA Cup , against Bolton Wanderers in the fourth round .

Before the season commenced midfielder Patrick Vieira was sold to Juventus ; striker Thierry Henry assumed his club captaincy role . Alexander Hleb was purchased from Stuttgart for an undisclosed fee in July 2005 ; in the winter transfer window Arsenal signed midfielder Abou Diaby , and forwards Emmanuel Adebayor and Theo Walcott .

Arsenal lost to league champions Chelsea in the 2005 FA Community Shield at the Millennium Stadium . An indifferent start in the league saw Arsenal peak in second position after 13 matches , but a run of three consecutive defeats a month later had effectively ruled them out of title contention . On the final day , they beat Wigan Athletic 4 ? 2 at Highbury ; Tottenham Hotspur 's defeat at West Ham United meant Arsenal secured fourth place . The team 's performances in Europe were more striking ; they eliminated Real Madrid , Juventus and Villarreal in the knockout stages . In the 2006 UEFA Champions League Final held at the Stade de France in Paris on 17 May 2006 , goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was sent off for a professional foul on Barcelona 's Samuel Eto 'o . Although defender Sol Campbell gave Arsenal a first half lead from a set piece , the team conceded twice in the final 15 minutes to lose the match .

To mark the final season at Highbury , Arsenal held a valedictory campaign titled " Highbury ? The Final Salute " . The club staged several themed matchdays and a redcurrant home kit replaced the common red to honour the shirts worn in 1913 .

= = Background = =

Arsenal began the preceding season as league champions ; a win against Blackburn Rovers in August 2004 ensured they eclipsed Nottingham Forest 's record of 42 league matches unbeaten . The run extended to six more matches , before losing 2 ? 0 to Manchester United at Old Trafford on 24 October 2004 . Poor form throughout November allowed league leaders Chelsea to extend the gap at the top ; Wenger conceded retaining the title in April 2005 , calling his opponents " worthy champions ... they have been remarkably consistent . " A run of twelve league matches unbeaten , culminating in a 7 ? 0 home win against Everton helped Arsenal finish in second place . In spite of exiting the Champions League to Bayern Munich in the second round , the team won the 2005 FA Cup Final against Manchester United ? winning 5 ? 4 on penalties after a goalless draw .

= = = Highbury ? The Final Salute = = =

The 2005 ? 06 season marked Arsenal 's final season at Highbury , their home since 1913 . The club planned to move half a mile to the Emirates Stadium , considered " vital to our future " by Wenger , as it financially would help them to compete at the top level . To mark the valedictory campaign titled " Highbury ? The Final Salute " , the club staged many special activities on matchdays " ... to celebrate the many great players and moments that this fantastic stadium has witnessed . " A redcurrant home kit was designed to honour the shirts worn in the club 's first season at Highbury . It was adorned with gold lettering and accompanied by white shorts and redcurrant socks .

= = = Transfers = = =

Arsenal signed youth players Nicklas Bendtner , Vito Mannone and Armand Traoré in the summer transfer window . Belarusian Alexander Hleb joined the club for an undisclosed fee on 12 July 2005 . Arsenal made four more additions during the season : goalkeeper Mart Poom , signed on a permanent deal , midfielder Abou Diaby , who reportedly turned down an offer to join Chelsea and forwards Emmanuel Adebayor and Theo Walcott .

After the early departures of Jermaine Pennant and Stuart Taylor , club captain Patrick Vieira joined Italian side Juventus in a £ 13 @. @ 7 million deal . Wenger did not intend to sign a replacement , saying " I am not in a hurry . We have Gilberto , Flamini and Fàbregas . Pirès can play in there also so we have plenty of players . " English midfielder David Bentley made his loan deal at Blackburn Rovers permanent in the January transfer window .

= = Pre @-@ season = =

= = FA Community Shield = =

As winners of the FA Cup in the previous season , Arsenal contested the 2005 FA Community Shield against league champions Chelsea . Two goals scored by striker Didier Drogba in the first half meant Arsenal lost the match . Wenger commented afterwards that Chelsea 's gameplan made it difficult for the Arsenal defenders , and noted his opposition 's strength was playing long balls . When asked if he was concerned by the performance , Wenger replied : " Why should I worry ? Did you see the game ? You can worry for the Chelsea supporters . "

= = Premier League = =

= = = August ? October = = =

Arsenal began their final league season at Highbury against Newcastle United on 14 August 2005 . In spite of having a man advantage after midfielder Jermaine Jenas was sent off for a challenge on Gilberto Silva , striker Thierry Henry scored from the penalty spot in the 81st minute . Robin van Persie added a second , four minutes from the end of the match . A fortunate goal from Drogba inflicted Arsenal 's first defeat against Chelsea in the league for almost a decade . The team responded with a 4 ? 1 victory against Fulham , whereby Henry and defender Pascal Cygan both scored twice . Arsenal lost away to Middlesbrough on 10 September 2005 , in a performance derided by Wenger as being " unacceptable " . A brace (two goals) from Sol Campbell against Everton was followed by a goalless draw against newly promoted West Ham United .

An own goal scored by Stephen Clemence gave Arsenal a 1 ? 0 victory in the first week of October at home to Birmingham City . Despite being " technically the better side " away to West Bromwich Albion , Arsenal lost 2 ? 1 ; Wenger after the match commented that the team " played with great spirit but ? were punished for a lack of experience and maturity because we didn 't take advantage of the chances we created . " A penalty scored by Robert Pirès was enough to secure three points against Manchester City . The midfielder wasted a second penalty in the second half , choosing to recreate a spot kick executed by Johan Cruyff and Jesper Olsen for Ajax . Having attempted to roll the ball towards onrushing Henry , Pirès inadvertently flicked the ball twice , enabling referee Mike Riley to award a free @-@ kick to Manchester City . Although both players were scrutinised by Chelsea manager José Mourinho , they were commended by Cryuff for showing a desire to try something different . The final league match of October ended in a 1 ? 1 draw against local rivals Tottenham Hotpsur .

= = = November ? February = = =

A 3 ? 1 win at home to Sunderland on 5 November 2005 meant Arsenal moved third in the league

table . This was followed by a trip to the JJB Stadium ; Arsenal beat Wigan Athletic 3 ? 2 in a " hugely entertaining game on a cold , frosty afternoon " . Henry scored his 100th goal at Highbury against Blackburn Rovers to extend a club unbeaten run of nine matches . Defeat at Bolton Wanderers in early December concerned Wenger , admitting the opponents showed the template required to beat his team . A further defeat against Newcastle United , where Gilberto Silva was sent off in the second half highlighted the " physical absence " of Vieira in midfield . In losing 2 ? 0 to Chelsea a week after ? their third successive defeat for the first time under Wenger , Arsenal lay in eighth position , 11 points behind Manchester United . An early morning kick @-@ off away to Charlton Athletic ended in a 1 ? 0 victory for Arsenal ; José Antonio Reyes scored his second goal in the league . Four first @-@ half goals against Portsmouth helped Arsenal to close the gap on second place by nine points . They ended the calendar year and began 2006 with goalless draws against Aston Villa and Manchester United respectively .

Arsenal recorded the biggest win of the league season , against Middlesbrough at Highbury . Henry scored a hat @-@ trick in a 7 ? 0 victory ; the striker post @-@ match deemed it was vital for the club to finish in the top four " ? for me , for the club and for the fans . " They suffered two consecutive defeats : away to Everton and at home to West Ham United . In the latter match , Campbell was substituted at his request before the second half , having been at fault for Nigel Reo @-@ Coker and Bobby Zamora ? s goals . He " went missing " after the match , subsequently returning to training five days later . Emmanuel Adebayor scored his first goal for Arsenal in a 2 ? 0 win against Birmingham City on 4 February 2006 . A stoppage time goal scored by Gilberto earned the team a point against Bolton Wanderers at Highbury ; they went 1 ? 0 down in the 12th minute after Kevin Nolan chipped the ball past goalkeeper Jens Lehmann . Arsenal conceded a late goal away to Liverpool on Valentine 's Day ? a result which left the club 10 points behind their opponents . Defeat against Blackburn Rovers meant they lost for the second consecutive game . Having collected just three wins out of a possible 14 away from home , Wenger admitted the form of the team remained " a big worry " given they needed to play five more .

= = = March ? May = = =

In the first week of March , Arsenal beat Fulham 4 ? 0 with a " commanding performance " from Henry , who scored two goals . The striker scored the winning goal against Liverpool in their next match , from a Steven Gerrard backpass . A polished performance against Charlton Athletic was followed by a five @-@ goal win at home to Aston Villa on 1 April 2006 . Arsenal lost 2 ? 0 to Manchester United and dropped two points against relegation @-@ threatened Portsmouth , meaning a fourth @-@ place finish was in Tottenham Hotspur 's favour .

Dennis Bergkamp scored his final goal for Arsenal against West Bromwich Albion in a 3 ? 1 win ; he came on as a substitute in the second half to set up Pirès to score the winning goal , moments after Nigel Quashie had levelled the scoreline . Arsenal drew 1 ? 1 at home to Tottenham Hotspur , with Wenger choosing to rest players in mind for the club 's Champions League semi @-@ final . A 3 ? 0 win away at Sunderland was overshadowed by a tackle on Abou Diaby , ruling him out for the remainder of the season . Two late goals scored by Reyes against Manchester City moved Arsenal a point behind Tottenham Hotspur in fourth . In the final competitive match played at Highbury , Arsenal faced Wigan Athletic , needing to better their rivals result to guarantee Champions League qualification . Henry scored a hat @-@ trick in a six @-@ goal match , helping Arsenal end the season with 67 points from 38 matches . Tottenham Hotspur 's defeat against West Ham United meant Arsenal finished fourth , a position Gilberto felt the club " deserved " .

= = = Match results = = =

= = = Classification = = =

Source :