

= 1997 ? 98 Arsenal F.C. season =

The 1997 ? 98 season was the 100th season of competitive football played by Arsenal . Managed by Arsène Wenger in his first full season , the club ended the campaign winning the league championship for the first time in seven years . At Wembley Stadium , Arsenal beat Newcastle United 2 ? 0 in the 1998 FA Cup Final to win the competition and complete a domestic double ? the second in the club 's history and the first since 1970 ? 71 . Arsenal exited the Football League Cup in the semi @-@ finals to Chelsea and lost on aggregate score to PAOK in the UEFA Cup first round .

In the transfer window , Arsenal purchased several players , including midfielders Marc Overmars and Emmanuel Petit and goalkeeper Alex Manninger ; English midfielder Paul Merson departed to join Middlesbrough . Arsenal began the league season relatively well , but a run of three defeats in four matches between November and December 1997 left the team in sixth position before Christmas , and seemingly out of championship contention . Although they were 12 points behind reigning champions Manchester United at the end of February , a winning streak of nine matches ensured Arsenal won the championship with a 4 ? 0 win over Everton on 3 May 1998 .

In recognition of the team 's achievement , Wenger was awarded the Carling Manager of the Year award and striker Dennis Bergkamp was given the accolade of PFA Players ' Player of the Year by his fellow peers and FWA Footballer of the Year by football writers .

= = Background = =

In the 1996 ? 97 season , Arsenal contested in the Premier League . The club , having dismissed manager Bruce Rioch before the beginning of the league season , appointed French manager Arsène Wenger , in a contract worth £ 2 million . Arsenal led the league table for much of November , but defeat to Nottingham Forest on 21 December 1996 concurred with no wins in December . Two draws and defeats in February moved Arsenal into fourth position ; a previous defeat to Liverpool at home a month earlier left Wenger ruling the club out of the title race . On the final day of the season , Arsenal beat Derby County 3 ? 1 at the Baseball Ground , finishing third on goal difference . The team , thus , qualified for the UEFA Cup , missing out on UEFA Champions League qualification to second place Newcastle United .

= = = Transfers = = =

The major departure of the 1997 ? 98 season for Arsenal was midfielder Paul Merson , who joined Middlesbrough in a £ 4 @. @ 5 million deal , replacing Juninho . Wenger said of the move , " You are never happy to lose a player of his calibre but it is a good deal for him and for the club " . Middlesbrough intended to sign David Platt , but a move never came to fruition , as talks broke down between both parties . Defender Matthew Rose and goalkeeper Lee Harper joined Queens Park Rangers for a combined fee of £ 750 @, @ 000 .

Arriving first during the summer was English defender Matthew Upson from Luton Town . French midfielders Emmanuel Petit and Gilles Grimandi joined from AS Monaco , where they were protégées to Wenger . Marc Overmars , a midfielder from Ajax was recruited in a £ 7 million deal and spoke of his delight at joining Arsenal in his press conference : " I like English football because there is more space . With my speed and quality I think it will be good for me here . " Deals for midfielders Luís Boa Morte and Alberto Mendez , striker Christopher Wreh and goalkeeper Alex Manninger were also finalised before August .

= = = = In = = = =

= = = = Out = = = =

= = Pre @-@ season = =

Key

= = Premier League = =

= = = August ? October = = =

Arsenal 's league campaign started on 9 August 1997 , with an away fixture at Leeds United . The match ended in a 1 ? 1 draw ; Ian Wright scored his first goal of the season , before a mix up in defence meant Leeds striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink equalised for the home team . Two days later , at home to Coventry City , Wright scored both goals in Arsenal 's 2 ? 0 win , leaving the striker one goal away from equalling Cliff Bastin 's club goalscoring record . Two goals from Dennis Bergkamp and a debut goal by midfielder Marc Overmars , the following week helped Arsenal to win at Southampton . In spite of Bergkamp scoring a hat @-@ trick against Leicester City , Arsenal drew the match 3 ? 3 , having conceded a third in the sixth minute of stoppage time . A further draw at home to rivals Tottenham Hotspur , for whom defender Sol Campbell particularly impressed , meant Arsenal ended August in fifth position .

Wright scored his 179th goal for Arsenal against Bolton Wanderers and broke the club goalscoring record in a 4 ? 1 win at Highbury . Manager Arsène Wenger praised the striker 's achievement , adding " He is fantastic for the timing of his movement . It is so intelligent when he has not got the ball . " Arsenal faced Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on 21 September 1997 ; at 2 ? 2 , a late goal by left back Nigel Winterburn from 25 yards ended the home team 's resistance , who went down to ten men after Frank Leboeuf was sent off . September ended with a third consecutive win , against West Ham United . Goals from Bergkamp , Wright and Overmars helped Arsenal move to the top of the league table , one point above champions Manchester United . October began with a 5 ? 0 win at home to promoted Barnsley , but two goalless draws ? first at Crystal Palace and then to Aston Villa meant Manchester United moved a point ahead of Arsenal .

= = = November ? February = = =

Arsenal 's first fixture of November was against Derby County at the newly built Pride Park Stadium . They were awarded a penalty kick in the first half after Patrick Vieira was fouled by Lee Carsley ; Wright hit the penalty , which ricocheted off the goal crossbar . Two goals by Paulo Wanchope and a late strike by Dean Sturridge condemned Arsenal to their first defeat of the league season . Arsenal played Manchester United on 9 November 1997 and needed a win to stay one point behind the league leaders . Wenger admitted in his pre @-@ match comments that a second successive defeat would make it " difficult " for them to catch Manchester United , but not " impossible " . Striker Nicolas Anelka , standing in for Bergkamp , scored his first goal for Arsenal and Vieira added a second , leaving goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel rattled . Although Teddy Sheringham scored twice for Manchester United to level the score , midfielder David Platt headed into the far corner with seven minutes left of the match to score the winner for Arsenal . Wenger said of the win : " This result is good for the English game because it will stimulate interest in the Premier League " and opposing manager Alex Ferguson half agreed : " A one @-@ horse race is not good for the game . " Arsenal failed to capitalise on the result , losing to Sheffield Wednesday and Liverpool , in a period where the team were depleted due to injuries .

A goal from Wright against Newcastle United , his first in seven matches , was enough to earn victory away at St James ' Park . Arsenal lost 1 ? 3 to Blackburn Rovers the following week , denting their chances of closing the gap on leaders Manchester United . The match was overshadowed by Wright being booed off by supporters because of his performance , who responded by appearing " at the window of the east stand clad in vest and underpants haranguing the crowd . " Arsenal began

the Christmas period with a fixture against Wimbledon ; the game was abandoned by referee Dermot Gallagher due to floodlight failure and rescheduled for a later date . On Boxing Day , an own goal by Steve Walsh helped Arsenal beat Leicester City 2 ? 1 at Highbury . A draw at Tottenham Hotspur , who were welcoming the return of Jürgen Klinsmann left Arsenal in sixth at the end of the calendar year , 12 points behind Manchester United .

In the first league match of 1998 , Overmars scored twice to earn Arsenal a win against Leeds United . A week later the team drew 2 ? 2 at Coventry City , losing more ground at the top of the table . January came to a conclusion with a 3 ? 0 victory over Southampton , with all three goals scored in the space of seven minutes . A further two wins in February , at home to Chelsea and Crystal Palace , moved Arsenal into second place , nine points behind Manchester United , albeit having played two games less .

= = = March ? May = = =

Arsenal dropped two points against West Ham United on 2 March 1998 , after a goalless draw at Upton Park . The following match , they closed the gap to six points , after Manchester United could also only manage to draw against West Ham but dropped to third position . A goal from Christopher Wreh in the rescheduled match at Wimbledon was enough to move Arsenal into second and set up a title clash between themselves and Manchester United on 14 March 1998 . The result moreover reopened betting after Manchester bookmaker Fred Done decided to pay out on punters who backed Manchester United . After numerous attempts to break the deadlock in the match , Arsenal scored with 15 minutes left of the match ; Overmars latched onto a header by Anelka and managed to flick the ball beyond the goalkeeper . When asked which team was in the best position going into the final games of the season , Wenger told Sky Sports that United had a " small advantage " over the rest ; Ferguson however warned that it would be " inevitable " for Arsenal to drop points . Two 1 ? 0 wins , first at home to Sheffield Wednesday and then Bolton Wanderers meant Arsenal kept an eighth successive clean sheet , a new league record .

Arsenal beat Newcastle United 3 ? 1 to move within four points of Manchester United in early April . The return of Bergkamp from a three @-@ match suspension helped Arsenal to trounce Blackburn Rovers ; the team scored three goals in the space of the opening 14 minutes . Manchester United 's failure to beat Newcastle United meant Arsenal went top of the league table after beating Wimbledon by five goals to nil . Victory against Barnsley and four days later at home against Derby County meant Arsenal needed one more win become league champions , regardless of Manchester United 's results . Although Bergkamp was ruled out for the remainder of the season having sustained an injury against Derby , Arsenal eased to a 4 ? 0 win against Everton ? the last goal scored by club captain Tony Adams to become the first club other than Manchester United or Blackburn Rovers to win the Premier League . A run of ten straight victories ? a new record , was set , and Wenger became the first non @-@ British manager to lead a team to win the league championship . Arsenal lost their final two matches of the league season , choosing to rest players for the upcoming FA Cup Final .

= = = Match results = = =

= = = Classification = = =

Source :