



# Arsenal

## Pre-Match Analysis

### Expected Line-up:

Manager: **Mikel Arteta**

Formation: **4-3-3**



### **Injuries and Suspensions list<sup>1</sup>**

#### ***Injured Players***

#07 Bukayo Saka (Hamstring)  
#09 Gabriel Jesus (Knee)  
#18 Takehiro Tomiyasu (Knee)  
#29 Kai Havertz (Hamstring)

#### ***Suspended Players***

None

#### ***Ineligible Players***

#30 Raheem Sterling (parent club)

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.premierinjuries.com/injury-table.php>

## Data-Driven Insights

All data displayed in following section are sourced from [FBRef via Opta](#), unless otherwise mentioned.

### Strong Defence

Arsenal have one of the strongest defences in the Premier League this season, often shutting out the opposition by preventing them from creating goal-scoring opportunities.

*Table 1:*

Arsenal 24/25 Premier League: **Defensive Metrics**

Metric	Value	EPL Ranking (high → low)
Goals Against	24	20 <sup>th</sup>
Clean Sheets	10	3 <sup>rd</sup>
xGA	22.9	20 <sup>th</sup>
Shots on Target Against per90	3.15	20 <sup>th</sup>
Opposition Average Shot Distance (in yards)	18.4	20 <sup>th</sup>

### Effective High Press

One of the biggest reasons for Arsenal's defensive solidity is their high pressing approach, that often disrupts their opponent's attempts to hold possession and string passes together.

*Table 2:*

Arsenal 24/25 Premier League: **Pressing Metrics**

Metric	Value	EPL Ranking (high → low)
PPDA <sup>2</sup>	8.36	20 <sup>th</sup>
Tackles in Attacking Third per90	3.43	1 <sup>st</sup>
Opposition Launch Rate	45.1%	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Clearances per90	26.67	19 <sup>th</sup>
Opponent Passes Attempted per90	411.93	20 <sup>th</sup>
Opponent Pass Completion Rate per90	80%	16 <sup>th</sup>
Opponent Touches in Midfield Third per90	201.78	19 <sup>th</sup>

### Attacking Set-Piece Strength

Arsenal have been one of the strongest teams in terms of their set-piece design and execution, especially from attacking corners.

*Table 3:*

Arsenal 24/25 Premier League: **Set-Piece Metrics**

Metric	Value (per90)	EPL Ranking (high → low)
SCA: Dead Balls	61 (2.18)	2 <sup>nd</sup>
GCA: Dead Balls	9 (0.32)	1 <sup>st</sup>
Goals Scored from Set-Pieces	10	4 <sup>th</sup>
Goals Scored from Corners	8	1 <sup>st</sup>
Set-Piece xG <sup>3</sup>	13.24	1 <sup>st</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Data Source: Understat | <https://understat.com/league/EPL>

<sup>3</sup> Data Source: Opta | <https://theanalyst.com/competition/premier-league/stats>

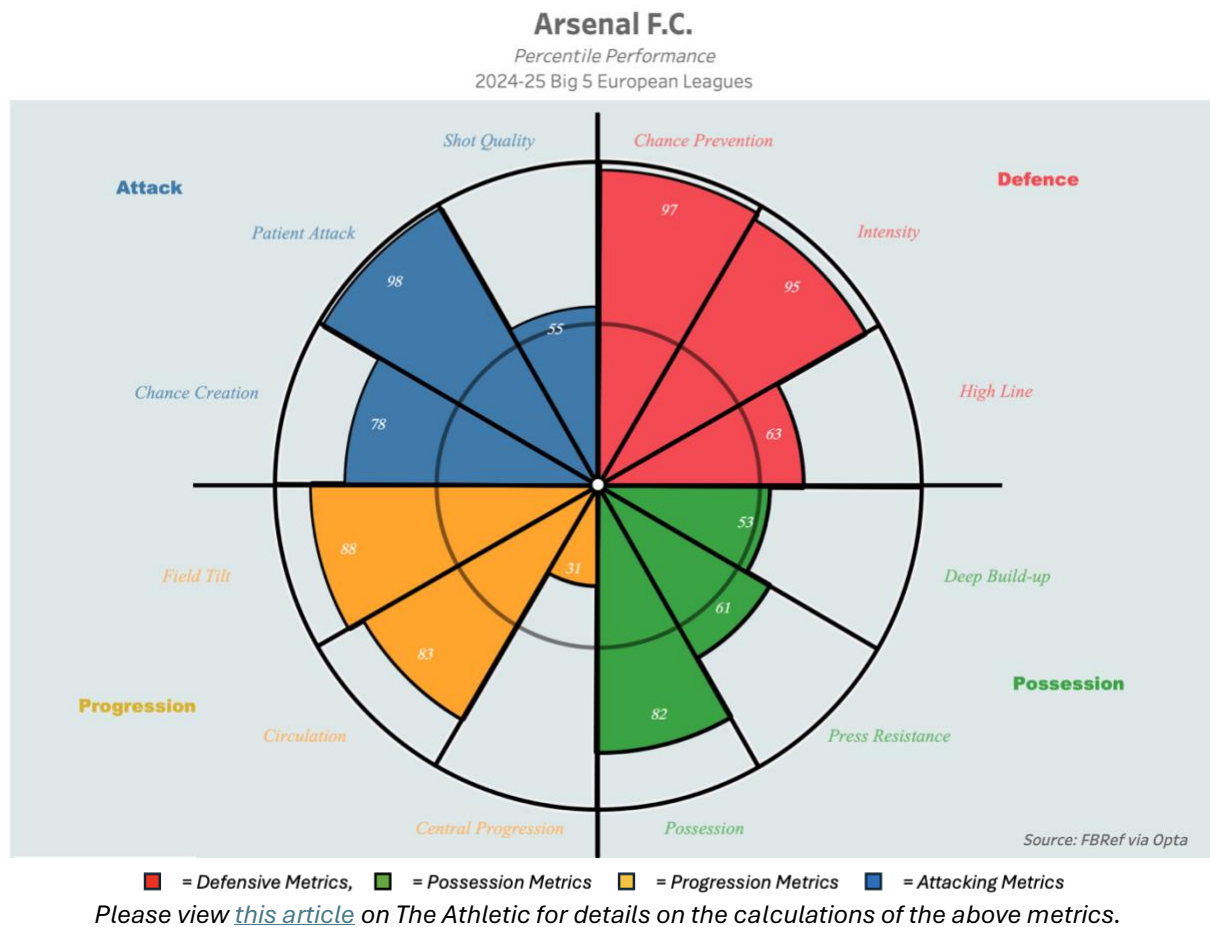
## ***How was Arsenal's Attacking Statistics changed since Bukayo Saka's Injury?***

Arsenal's season has been plagued with injuries to their attacking unit. Most importantly, Bukayo Saka has been injured Arsenal's fixture against Crystal Palace on December 21<sup>st</sup>. Saka's absence is often felt in Arsenal's creativity in the final third and their attacking efficiency.

*Table 4:*  
Arsenal change in attacking metrics without Saka

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Value per90</b>	<b>Change %</b>	<b>EPL Ranking (high → low)</b>
Goals Scored	1.64	-18.18%	7 <sup>th</sup>
xG	1.32	-23.52%	11 <sup>th</sup>
Shots on Target	4.18	-16.36%	10 <sup>th</sup>
SCA: Dead Balls	1.82	-24.61%	8 <sup>th</sup>

## Tactical Analysis:



Arsenal's tactical approach allows them to dominate possession, often holding long periods of controlled possession in the attacking half, utilizing fluid movements and technical abilities of their players to create chances. In off-the-ball situations, they focus on shutting out the opposition by pressing aggressively, often forcing quick turnovers in advanced positions while limiting space for the opposition to build through them.

- Defensive Solidity combined with an Aggressive Pressing Approach are evident in the above playstyle wheel chart, with Arsenal ranking in the upper 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles for **Chance Prevention** and **Intensity**.
- Arsenal's dominant playstyle and desire to control possession in the attacking half are evident from their high **Possession**, **Field Tilt** and **Circulation** numbers.
  - This directly correlates to having a **Patient Attack**, as Arsenal are willing to hold possession in the attacking third while circulating the ball to create stronger goal-scoring opportunities.
- Arsenal's low **Central Progression** numbers indicate their preference to attack via the flanks, often using their wingers and overlapping full-backs to deliver crosses into the box.

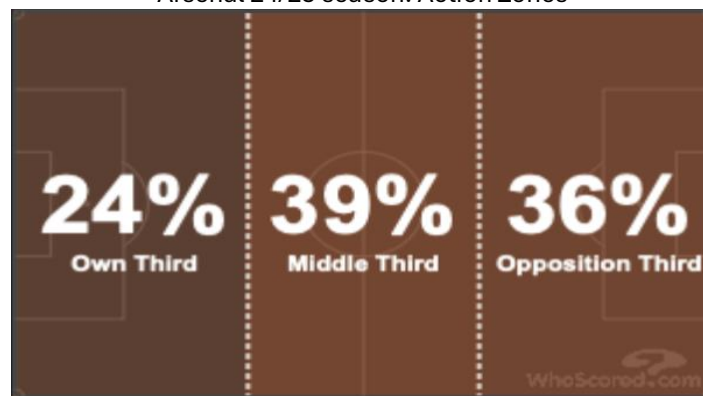
## In-Possession Tactics

All charts and tables in the following section are created using data obtained from [FBRef via Opta](#).

Playstyle Wheel Highlights: *Low Central Progression* ; *High Circulation* ; *High Field Tilt* ; *High Patience in Attacks*.

Arsenal have a high field tilt %, often holding the ball in the midfield and attacking thirds of the pitch (see figure 1). Their tactics are designed in a way that allows them to dominate possession in advanced areas of the pitch, creating chances using constant pressure and fluid movements.

Figure 1:  
Arsenal 24/25 season: Action Zones



Source: WhoScored.com

## Phase 1: Build-up

### Goalkicks

- Arsenal's centre-backs split while the holding midfielder drops in between them to help Arsenal play out the opposition press.
- However, when they play against *opposition that press high and/or mark their midfield passing options*, Arsenal slightly change their build-up approach. They **play short passes from goalkicks** to tempt the opposition press, **before rotating the ball back to their goalkeeper who then plays it long** to the attacking unit.

### Defensive Third

- When Arsenal have possession in their defensive third, they **build using a 3-player defensive line, while creating a numerical advantage in midfield** to help progress the ball up the pitch.
  - This defensive line involves the 2 centre-backs and the right-back

## Phase 2: Progression into Final Third

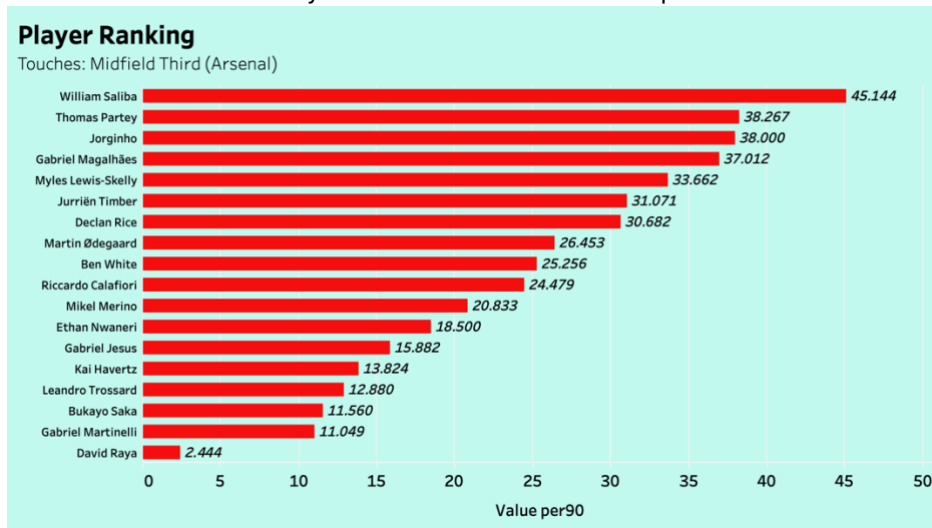
- Having a **numerical advantage in midfield** is vital to Arsenal's in-possession tactics. The movements of Arsenal's players outlined below allows them to create this numerical advantage and dominate possession in midfield.
  - *Left-back inverts into midfield.*
  - The two *central midfielder drop deep in their respective half-spaces.*
  - Arsenal's *striker* plays as a 'False 9', often *dropping into the midfield third* to provide passing options for Arsenal.

## What player(s) are frequently involved in this phase?

- The 5 players in midfield, in combination with the two centre-backs, often play quick, short passes in triangles to open space in a congested midfield area and progress the ball towards the final third (see figure 2).

Figure 2:

Arsenal Players: Touches in Midfield Third per90



The two central defenders (Saliba and Gabriel) and the holding midfielders (Jorginho and Partey) have the highest touches in midfield among Arsenal players this season.

## Phase 3: Final Third

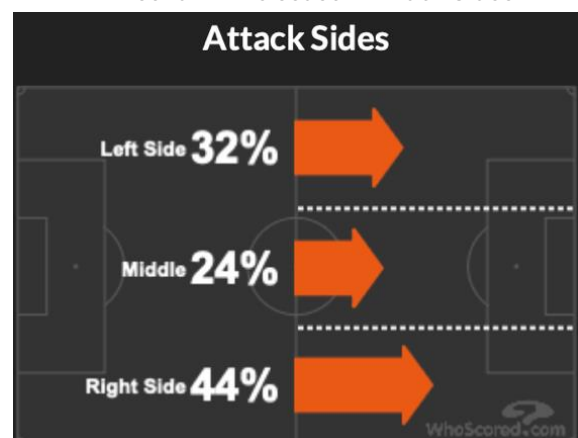
Arsenal's tactics in the final third involve the use of technical and creative players on their flanks, with inverted wingers looking to cut inside and create chances. Additionally, Arsenal adopt a strategy of operating in triangles relative to the player in-possession, often rotating positions while maintaining shape to make it harder for the opposition to defend them.

### Attacking Characteristics:

- Arsenal primarily **use the flanks to attack**, often crossing the ball into the box to create chances.
  - Arsenal have crosses the ball 21.11 times per 90 this season, ranking them as the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest team in the Premier League to do so.

Figure 3:

Arsenal 24/25 season: Attack Sides



**Majority of Arsenal's attacks this season have generated on the right flank.**

A possible reason for this could be because of the quality of Ødegaard and Saka who occupy positions there on that side of the pitch for Arsenal (see figure 3).

Source: [WhoScored.com](https://www.whoscored.com)

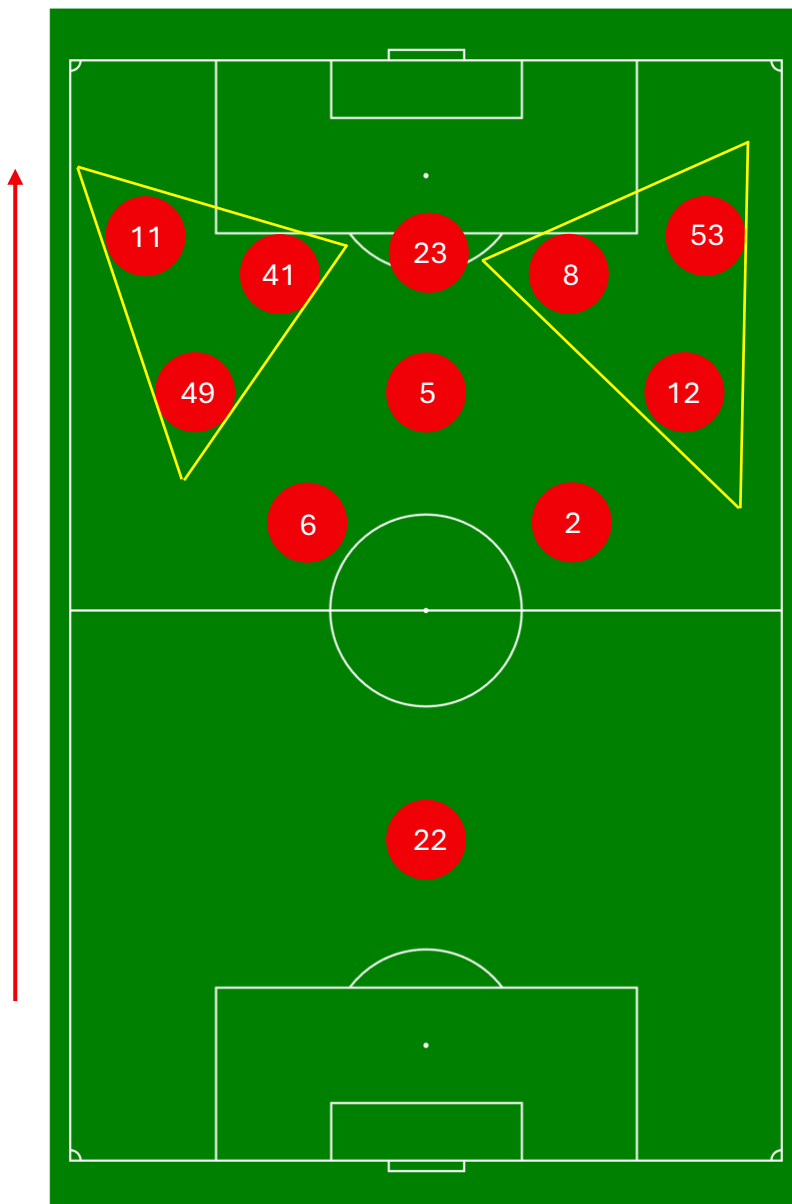
- **Arsenal's wingers like to cut inside from the wing onto their stronger foot, often operating like inverted wingers.** From this position at the edge of the box, they either:
  - Deliver the ball into the box, or
  - Try to play quick, short passes with their central midfielders.
- **Arsenal's inverting wingers further opens space for the full-backs to make overlapping runs on the flanks.**
- Declan Rice (#41) often joins Mikel Moreno (#23) in the box to get on the end of crosses, especially when possession is held on the right flank.

### Positional Rotations:

Arsenal deploy their own version of the 'Dutch Total Football (totaalvoetbal)' tactical system, using fluid movements and positional rotations in the final third to create chances.

*Figure 4:*

Arsenal FC's set-up in the final third

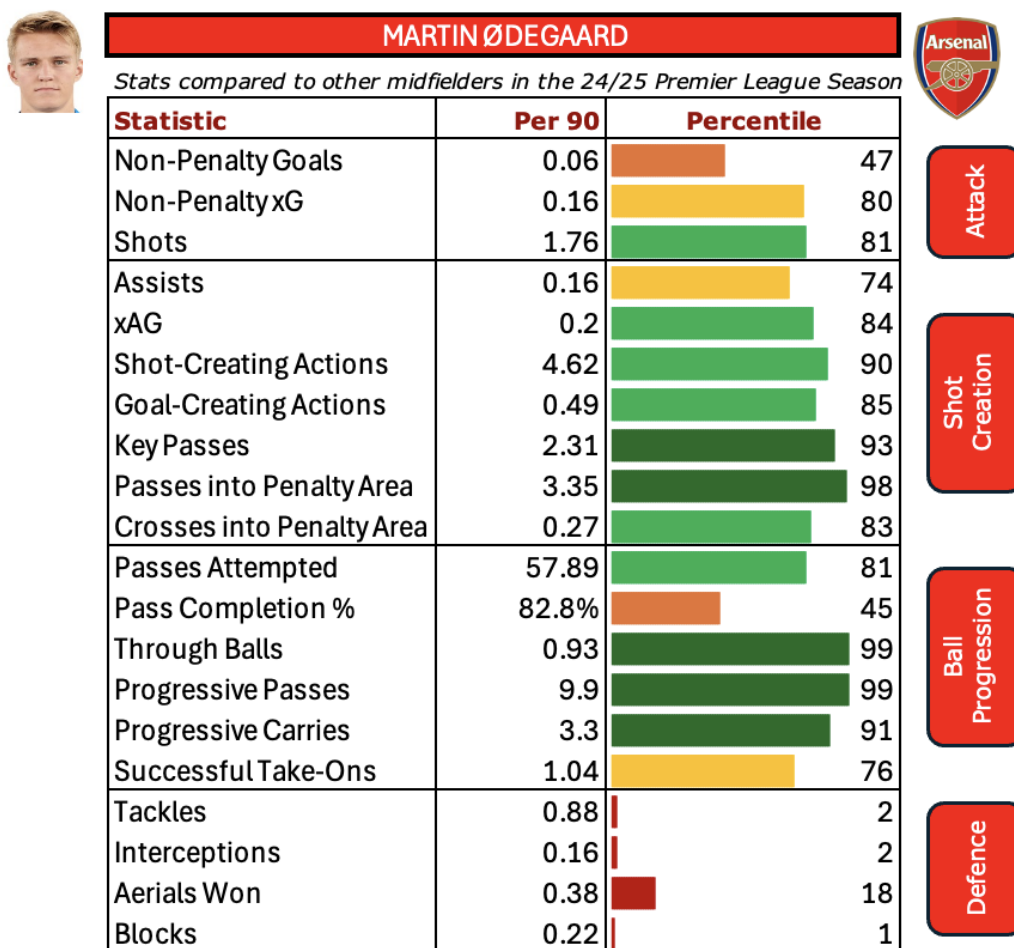


- The two triangles in the above chart indicate the sets of players who usually interchange positions during attacks to try and break through the opposition defence.
- The rest of the team are also set up in triangles, allowing Arsenal to keep passing lanes open and hold possession for longer periods of time.

## What player(s) are frequently involved in this phase?

- Martin Ødegaard (#8) is **Arsenal's primary creative player** (and one of the best in the Premier League this season), with a lot of Arsenal's final third play coming through him (see figure 5).
  - He often occupies a position at the edge of the box on the right half-space (see figure 4), using his vision and technical ability to operate in tight spaces.

Figure 5:



Source: Opta via FBRef



## Out-of-Possession Tactics

All charts and tables in the following section are created using data obtained from [FBRef via Opta](#).

Playstyle Wheel Highlights: High Chance Prevention ; High Intensity

Arsenal's off-the-ball tactics are focused on quick retention of possession, while reducing options for the opposition to play through the middle of the pitch.

**Pressing Approach:** Aggressive High Pressing with Man-to-Man Marking.

- Arsenal adopt a **high-intensity, high pressing approach** with two objectives:
  - Win possession in the attacking half of the pitch (see table 2)
  - Prevent opposition's deep build-up by covering passing options through the centre (see table 2)
- The press is often spearheaded by Martin Ødegaard, with a man-marking system behind him.

Figure 6:  
Arsenal's Defensive Shape



**Defensive Shape:**  
4-4-2

**Defensive Line Height:**  
Medium-High

**Defensive Width:**  
Compact

## **Defensive Tactics when Opposition break through Arsenal's press:**

- Arsenal drop into a 4-4-2 compact mid-block shape once the opposition is able to hold possession in the midfield third.
- They aim to reduce space in the middle of the pitch, making it really difficult for the opposition to play through them.

*Table 5:*

Arsenal 24/25 Premier League:

### **Opposition Attacking Creativity Metrics**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Value per90</b>	<b>EPL Ranking (high → low)</b>
Shots Against	9.70	19 <sup>th</sup>
Key Passes Against	7.00	20 <sup>th</sup>
Through Balls Against	1.07	20 <sup>th</sup>
Passes into Penalty Area Against	4.93	20 <sup>th</sup>
SCA: Open-Play Passes Against	13.33	17 <sup>th</sup>
GCA: Open-Play Passes Against	1.00	20 <sup>th</sup>

## Transition Tactics

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### Defence to Attack Transition: Quickly move into the Attacking Half

- Arsenal often attempt to move the ball up the thirds quickly after winning possession.
- Once they hold possession in the final third, they slow down and wait for support to arrive so they can create chances using their fluid attacking tactics.
  - Arsenal have taken *19 shots from fast breaks this season*<sup>4</sup>, which is the 16<sup>th</sup> lowest in the Premier League this season.

### Attack to Defence Transition: Counter-Press

- Arsenal's off-the-ball tactic of aggressive pressing begins as soon as they lose possession.
  - The three central midfielders and/or the attacking players often counter-press the opposition player in-possession, usually beginning with the player closest to the ball.
  - The rest of the players focus on dropping back into their defensive 4-4-2 shape.
- The high number of tackles made by Arsenal in the attacking third of the pitch, as well as the average number of clearances made per 90 by Arsenal's opposition are an indication of their efficient counter-pressing strategy (see [table 1](#) and [table 2](#))
  - The outcome of this strategy is witnessed in Arsenal's high field tilt and average possession percentage values.

## Set-Piece Tactics

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*Arsenal are one of the most threatening team in creating goal-scoring opportunities through dead-ball situations in the Premier League this season.*

*They have generated the 61 shots (2<sup>nd</sup> highest) from dead ball situations, scoring 9 goals. 8 of these goals have resulted from corners, more than any other team in the Premier League this season.*

## ATTACKING CORNERS

### Delivery Characteristics

- **In-swinging** deliveries
  - Left-sided corners taken by Declan Rice
  - Right-sided corners taken by Martin Ødegaard (in absence of Bukayo Saka)
- **Whipped** deliveries
- Usually **aimed inside the 6-yard box**, to either the front or back post.

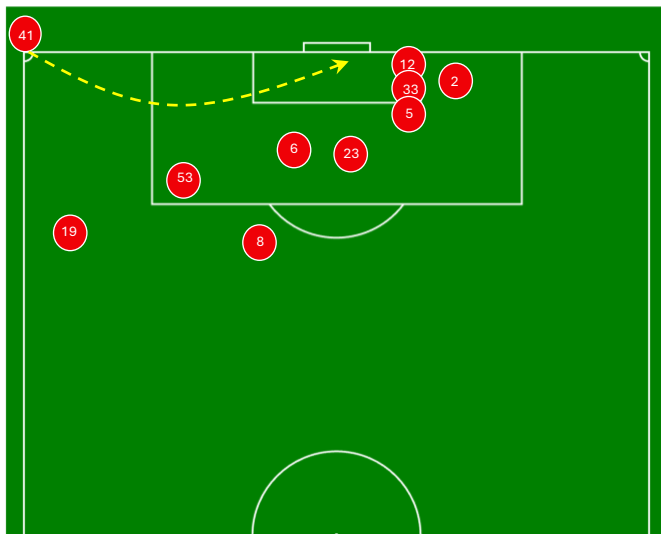
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<sup>4</sup> Source: Opta | <https://theanalyst.com/competition/premier-league/stats>

## Organization Characteristics

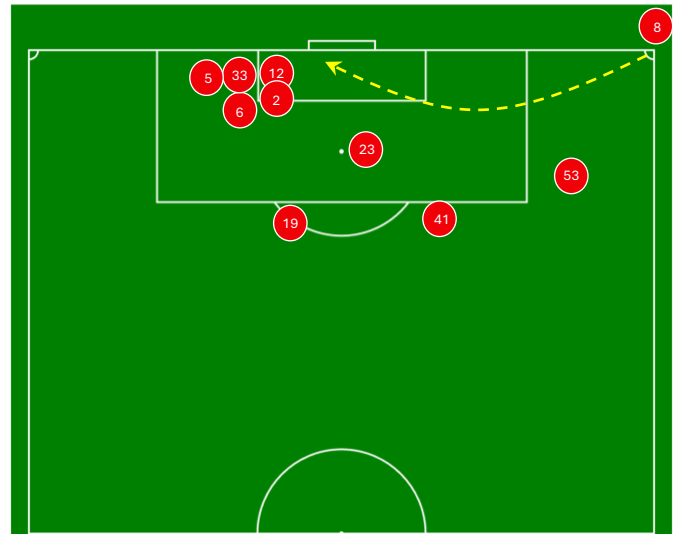
*Figure 7:*

Arsenal Primary Corner Set-up;  
Indicated as a left-sided attacking corner



*Figure 8:*

Arsenal Alternate Corner Set-up;  
Indicated as a right-sided attacking corner



### Pre-Delivery Organization

Arsenal's primary set-piece organization:

- 4 players line-up **beyond the back post** - #5, #33, #2, #12
- 2 players line-up **near the penalty spot** - #6, #23
- Remaining outfield players provide **short-passing options around the edge of the box**.

### Post-Delivery Movement

Arsenal's strongest aspect in set-pieces is their **execution**, with effective set-piece designs involving movement of players to block opposition defenders, thereby creating space for the intended target.

- **#12** runs across the face of goal to **block the keeper from coming out**.
- **#6, #23, and #2** are the **usual targets** for corners, with the rest of the players used to block opposition defenders.