

Premier League

Matchday 29 of 38

Arsenal



1

20' Mikel Moreno

Chelsea



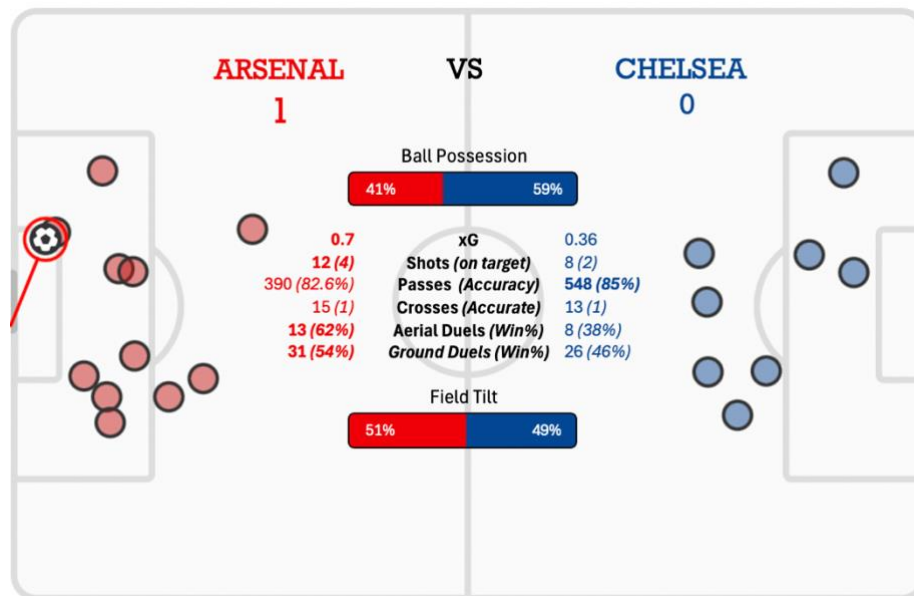
vs

-

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SUMMARIZED MATCH OUTCOME

Figure 1:
Shot-map + Relevant Statistics



Arsenal's off-the-ball tactics and midfield player rotations gave Arsenal the edge over Chelsea in this fixture. Arsenal held most of the momentum in the game, successfully shutting out Chelsea and preventing them from creating goal-scoring opportunities. In fact, Chelsea's xG of 0.36 was their lowest value in a single game this season.

Figure 2:
Possession Periods

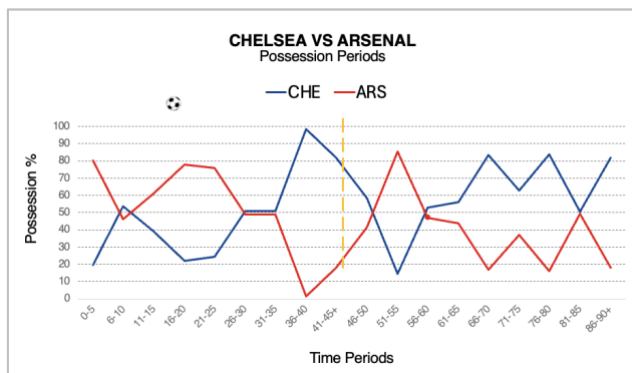
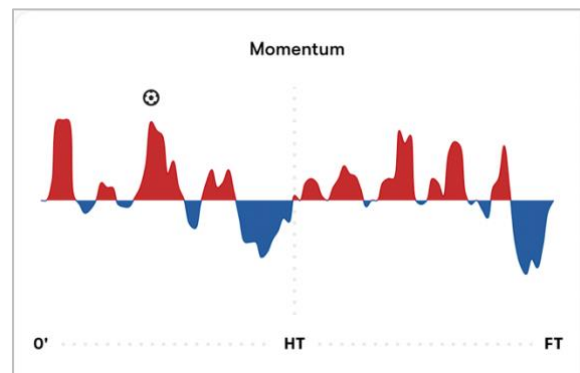


Figure 3:
Momentum Chart



Arsenal's high press disrupted Chelsea's build-up phase, preventing them from progressing the ball using their holding midfielders, while their defensive work rate and compact, low-block defensive shape prevented Chelsea from creating high quality chances when they did move the ball into the attacking third.

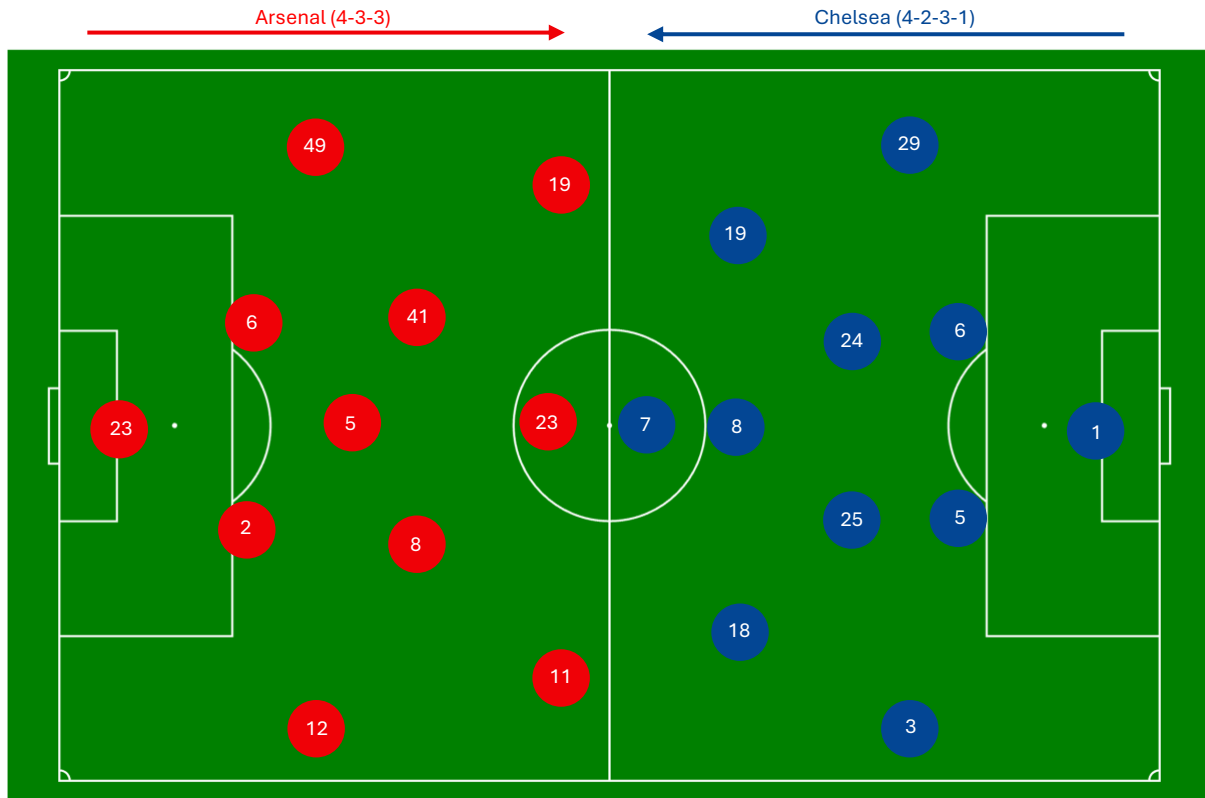
Let's dive deeper into the tactical analysis of both teams to get a better understanding of **how the teams were set-up** and **why key events occurred** during the fixture.

TACTICAL ANALYSIS

[All live-match screenshots shown in the report below have been taken from JioHotstar's Replay of Arsenal vs Chelsea on 16th March 2025. All rights belong to JioHotstar. They have been telestrated on by the author of this report]

Figure 4:

Arsenal vs Chelsea: Starting XI and Formation



CHELSEA:

In-possession

Chelsea shift into a **3-2-4-1** shape by pushing their left-back to join the attack.

- **Pedro Neto** (#7) played as a free-roaming lone striker.
- **Enzo Fernandez** (#8) and **Christopher Nkunku** (#18) occupied the right and left pockets respectively, while **Jadon Sancho** (#19) and **Marc Cucurella** (#3) stayed in the wide areas.
- **Moises Caicedo** (#25) and **Reece James** (#24) operated as the pivot.
- **Wesley Fofana** (#29), **Levi Colwill** (#6) and **Benoît Badiashile** (#5) made up a defensive line of 3.

Out-of-possession

Chelsea shift back into a 4-2-3-1 shape with man-marking player instructions.

- **Moises Caicedo**, **Reece James** and **Enzo Fernandez** were instructed to track Arsenal's three midfield players, since they all played a very important role in Arsenal's build-up and progression into the final third phase.

ARSENAL:

In-possession

- Arsenal split their centre-backs while both full-backs took up a position on either side of **Thomas Partey (#5)**, who played as a pivot.
- Left-back **Miles Lewis-Skelly (#49)** would invert into midfield at times to provide more passing options during Arsenal's build-up phase.
- **Declan Rice (#4)** and **Martin Ødegaard (#5)** stayed in the pockets in the midfield third. However, the three midfield players often interchanged positions to disrupt Chelsea's man-marking system and opening gaps in Chelsea's defending half.

Out-of-possession

- Arsenal employ a high-press against Chelsea in an adjusted and staggered **4-3-3** shape.
- They aimed to prevent Moises Caicedo and Reece James from receiving passes during build-up, while applying aggressive pressure on Benoît Badiashile and Robert Sanchez.
- When Chelsea hold possession in the final third of the pitch, Arsenal's players were instructed to sit in a 4-3-3 compact low-block to prevent Chelsea from creating chances through the middle.

ARSENAL'S DOMINANT START

Arsenal had a dominant start to the game, holding 63.5% possession in the opening 30 minutes.

Arsenal's **rotating, free-roaming midfield** was key to build through Chelsea's defensive shape.

- Since Chelsea used a man-marking system, **Martin Ødegaard (#8)** and **Declan Rice (#4)** were constantly moving around - dropping deep or switching their side – to make it hard for Chelsea's holding midfielders to track them.
- Their movements often opened up space for **Mikel Moreno (#23)** to drop deep to receive passes from Arsenal's defensive unit.

Additionally, Arsenal's **high-intensity defensive tactics** prevented Chelsea from holding onto possession, keeping Chelsea's defence was under constant pressure.

Most of the action in the opening half-hour of the game occurred in Arsenal's attacking third of the pitch.

Table 1:
Minute 0-30': Attacking Data [Data Source: Opta]

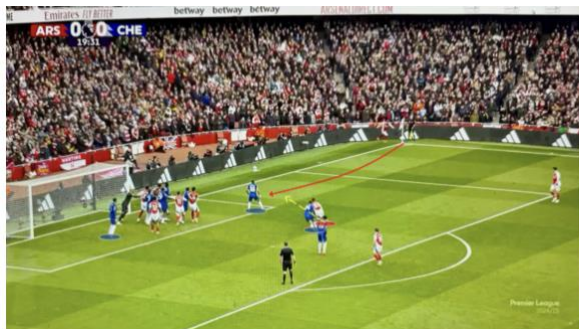
Metric	Arsenal	Chelsea
Goals	<u>1</u>	0
xG	<u>0.36</u>	0.03
Shots (on target)	<u>6 (2)</u>	1 (0)
Final Third Entries	15	<u>16</u>
Passes in Final Third	<u>41</u>	22
Attacking Penalty Box Entries	<u>6</u>	2

Arsenal made nearly double the amount of passes in the final third, created more chances and took more shots. One of these chances, from a right-sided corner, was converted by Mikel Moreno, scoring the only goal in the fixture.

GOAL 20' Mikel Moreno | Arsenal 1 – 0 Chelsea

Arsenal have been one of the strongest teams in terms of creating chances and scoring goals from corners. Their set-piece designs are very well-planned and executed. A number of players in the box are responsible for blocking the opposition defenders to make it easier for the intended target to win their aerial duel and create a goal-scoring opportunity.

Arsenal win a corner after **Gabriel Martinelli** drives past **Benoît Badiashile** on the right flank. He wins a corner for Arsenal, with an in-swinging cross delivered by **Martin Ødegaard** to the front post. Arsenal's set-piece unit lined up on the front post, while **Mikel Moreno** took up his usual spot near the penalty spot.



[Source: [JioHotstar](#)]

Christopher Nkunku was Chelsea's first man, while **Levi Colwill** stood at the far post. However, both of them were focused on the crowded front post area. Nkunku steps away from his position, which is exactly where **Mikel Moreno** runs to, to meet with Ødegaard's delivery. The ball loops over everyone and drops into the far side of the goal.

ARSENAL'S OFF-THE-BALL INSTRUCTIONS

Enzo Maresca likes his team to [hold possession and dictate the tempo of the game, often utilizing patient attacks and a high field tilt](#) to keep the opposition defence under pressure.

However, [Arsenal's off-the-ball instructions with high-intensity pressing and high defensive work rate](#) prevented Chelsea from doing so, thereby playing a vital role in their dominant start to the game.

Table 2:
Arsenal's strong Defensive Metrics

[Data Source: [Opta](#)]

Metric	Arsenal	Chelsea
Possession lost: defensive half	27	<u>34</u>
Possession lost: Midfield third	28	<u>45</u>
Midfield Third Recoveries	<u>22</u>	7
Aerial Duels Won %	<u>68.1%</u>	38.1%
Duels Won %	<u>54.3%</u>	42.5

High-Intensity Press

During build-up, Chelsea often looked to play through the left-side, getting Benoît Badiashile and Levi Colwill on-the-ball more often than Wesley Fofana.

Table 3:

Passes Attempted by Chelsea's defensive line

[Data Source: [FBRef](#)]

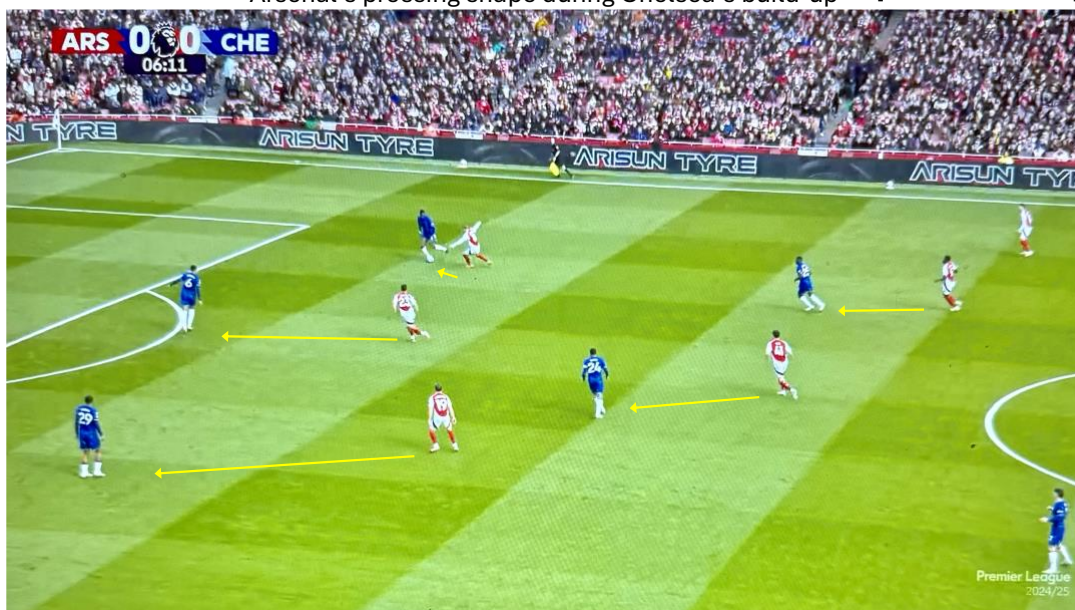
Player	Wesley Fofana	Levi Colwill	Benoît Badiashile
Passes Attempted vs Arsenal	38	77	81

Arsenal's pressed aggressively against Chelsea's 3-2-5 build-up shape, shifting into a **staggered 4-3-3 zonal structure**, blocking off passing lanes to the holding midfielders Moises Caicedo and Reece James, while pressing Chelsea's central defenders once they got on the ball.

Figure 5:

Arsenal's pressing shape during Chelsea's build-up

[Source: [JioHotstar](#)]



- Their press was often led by **Martin Ødegaard**, which was triggered when Chelsea moved the ball to Benoît Badiashile in the left centre-back role.
- **Mikel Moreno** and **Leandro Trossard** press against **Levi Colwill** and **Wesley Fofana** respectively.
- **Declan Rice** and **Thomas Partey** pressed against the two holding midfielders, while Gabriel Martinelli covered Marc Cucurella's movements and blocked the passing lane.

Arsenal's high-intensity pressing structure, often forced Chelsea to turnover possession in the middle third or give away the ball by playing long.

- Chelsea lost possession in the middle third 14 times in the opening 30 minutes.
- Badiashile played several unsuccessful long passes against Arsenal, with multiple passes being intercepted by Arsenal's midfield in the middle of the pitch.
 - His long pass accuracy was 37.5%, successfully completing just 3 out of 8 attempted long balls.
- When the ball was played back to Sanchez, either Mikel Moreno or Ødegaard would press him while the remaining players covered the short passing options, forcing Sanchez to play long.

Table 4:

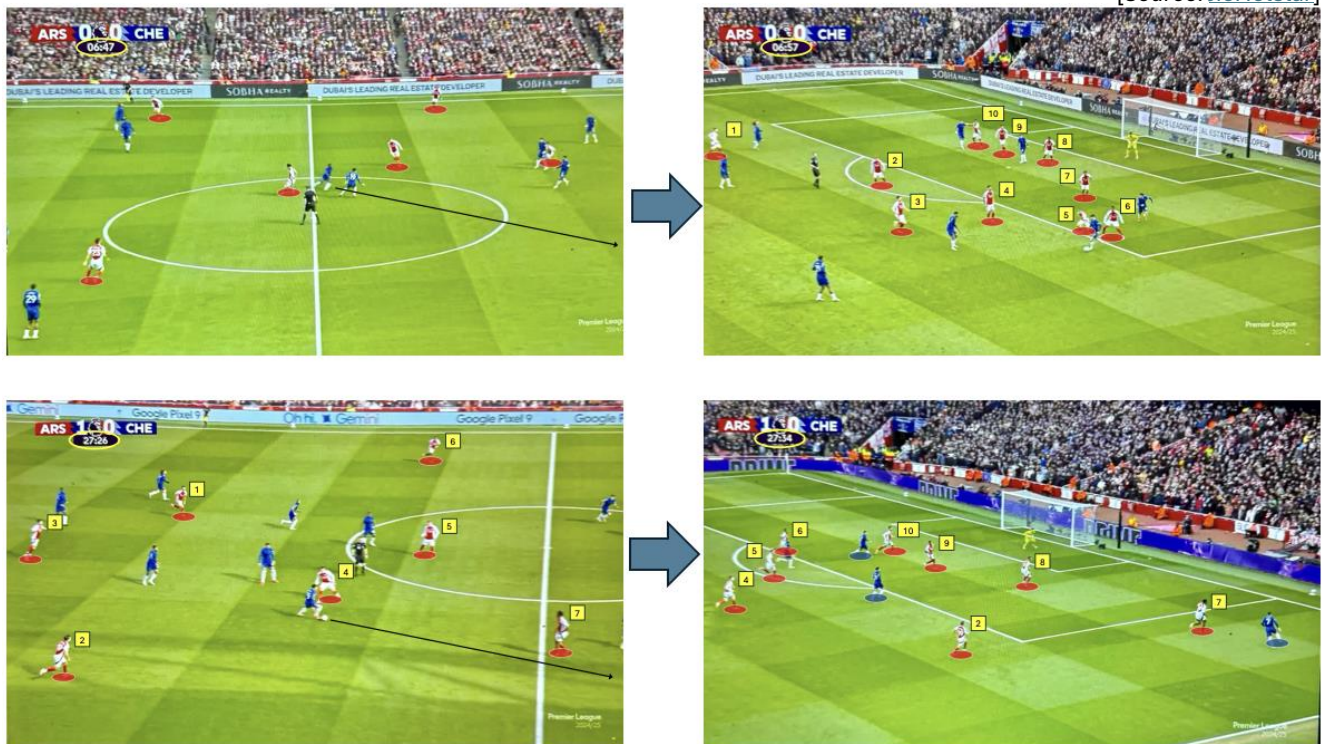
Change in Chelsea's build-up actions against Arsenal [Data Source: FBRef]

Metric	Season Average per90	vs Arsenal
GK open-play passes: Launch Rate	29.60%	47.10% ↑
GK open-play passes: Avg Distance	31.4 yards	40.1 yards ↑
Goalkicks: Launch Rate	14.00%	100.00% ↑
Goalkicks: Avg Distance	18.4 yards	66.0 yards ↑

High Defensive Work Rate

Chelsea used [fast breaks during attacking transitions](#) to shift momentum and move the ball into the final third, usually playing in [Pedro Neto](#) who made runs into the right flank. However, [Arsenal's high defensive work rate and compactness](#) prevented Chelsea from creating chances in these situations (see figures below)

[Source: JioHotstar]



The telestrated images above indicate Arsenal's defensive work rate and their desire to get numbers back in their defensive third during Chelsea's attacking transitions. In both situations above, [Arsenal's attacking and midfield units have fallen back to the edge of their defensive box within 10 seconds of Chelsea having won possession in midfield.](#)

Under pressure from Arsenal for the opening 30 minutes and after going 1-0 down, Chelsea began building momentum – keeping possession in Arsenal's defensive half for longer periods of time.

To counteract this, [Arsenal shifted into a low-block](#), staying compact through the middle and not allowing Chelsea to break through to create high quality chances.

Figure 6:
Arsenal Compact, Low-Block structure

[Source: [JioHotstar](#)]



CHELSEA'S LOW ATTACKING THREAT

A mitigated attacking line with injuries to several attacking players hampered Chelsea's ability to break Arsenal's compact, low-block shape.

Table 5:
Arsenal vs Chelsea: Attacking statistics

[Data Source: [Opta](#)]

Metric	Arsenal	Chelsea
Possession %	40.9	<u>59.1</u>
xG	<u>0.71</u>	0.36
Shots (on target)	<u>12 (4)</u>	8 (2)
Final Third Entries	39	<u>78</u>
Passes in Final Third	110	<u>140</u>
Attacking Penalty Box Entries	<u>21</u>	15

Lack of attacking creativity

The absence of Cole Palmer was felt in Chelsea's attacking creativity:

- Chelsea's Expected Assists in this game was 0.4; their season average was 1.2.
- Chelsea recorded just 9 touches in the attacking penalty area; their season average was 30.75 [Data Source: [FBRef](#)].
- 5 out of Chelsea's 8 shots came from outside the box.

Table 6:
Arsenal vs Chelsea: Attacking Creativity

[Data Source: [Opta](#)]

Metric	Arsenal	Chelsea
xG per shot	<u>0.059</u>	0.045
Shots outside the box %	<u>25%</u>	62.5%

Inefficient Attack

While Chelsea recorded double the number of entries into the final third as Arsenal, they struggled to penetrate Arsenal's defence to enter the box, often rotating the ball back to their defensive unit in the midfield third.

Table 7:

Arsenal vs Chelsea: Attacking Efficiency

[Data Source: [Opta](#)]

Metric	Arsenal	Chelsea
Passes per Final Third Entry	<u>2.82</u>	1.79
Efficiency in entering penalty area (<i>penalty area entries / final third entries</i>)	<u>53.8%</u>	19.2%

Arsenal might not have recorded as many final third entries, but when they did, they were much better than Chelsea at finding players and at playing through Chelsea's defensive line to enter the box.

CONCLUSION

After a strong start, Arsenal were able to use their **set-piece strength** to score directly from a corner routine in the 20th minute.

Following this, Chelsea were able to build momentum and dictate the tempo of the game but their weakened attacking unit failed to threaten Arsenal's goal against their compact, low-block shape. Arsenal succeeded in seeing out the 1-0 score till the final whistle, taking all three points against Chelsea.