



Arsenal 1-0 Atletico Madrid: Saka Sends Gunners To First Champions League Final In 20 Years

Description

Arsenal 1-0 Atletico Madrid at the Emirates on Tuesday 5 May 2026, and a 2-1 aggregate win sends Mikel Arteta's side to their first UEFA Champions League final in 20 years. Bukayo Saka's reflexive 44th-minute finish, after Jan Oblak parried a Leandro Trossard drive into his path, was the moment a long, careful European campaign earned its reward – Budapest on 30 May, and a shot at the trophy that has eluded the club throughout its history.



Source: Arsenal FC official website ([arsenal.com](https://www.arsenal.com))

Arsenal 1-0 Atletico Madrid: how a tense Emirates night unfolded

For 43 minutes, this looked exactly like the tie Diego Simeone wanted. Atletico arrived in N5 with a 1-1 first-leg cushion, set up in their familiar narrow block, and asked Arsenal a question they have not always answered well in Europe: what happens when the chances do not arrive in the first 20 minutes? The answer, this time, was patience. Declan Rice and Mikel Merino strangled the midfield zone in front of William Saliba and Gabriel. Martin Odegaard, sharper than he had been in Madrid, dropped between the lines to feed Saka and Trossard. The breakthrough was not pretty — but the moment was.

Trossard wriggled half a yard of space inside Atletico's right-back, drove low at the near post, and Oblak — a goalkeeper rarely caught flat — could only shovel the ball back into the danger zone. Saka, moving on the angle of the run that has defined his Arsenal career, reacted before Jose Maria

Gimenez and slid the rebound home from four yards. Emirates erupted. The Gunners had their lead, the aggregate was 2-1, and the night had its hero.

Atletico's chances and Raya's calm

The away side did push. Six minutes into the second half, William Saliba usually monastically composed sliced a backward header that Giuliano Simeone latched onto, only for Gabriel to recover and shepherd the Argentine wide of David Raya's near post. Antoine Griezmann, dropped deep in his usual fashion, twice forced Raya into smart saves. Julian Alvarez, who had levelled the first leg from the spot, hunted the channels but found Saliba and Gabriel uncompromising. Simeone threw on Alexander Sorloth and Conor Gallagher; the noise level rose with every ball into the box; the goal would not come.

Arsenal 1-0 Atletico Madrid: Saka's defining European night

Saka has been Arsenal's best player in Europe all season, and the bare numbers are a near-perfect summary of why. His goal at the Emirates was his ninth in the 2025/26 Champions League and his fifth in the knockout rounds only Thierry Henry has scored more European goals in a single Arsenal campaign. He created four chances, completed 92 per cent of his passes in the final third, and won every ground duel against Atletico left-back Reinildo. It was the senior performance of a 24-year-old who has grown into the club's totem.



Source: Arsenal FC official website ([arsenal.com](https://www.arsenal.com))

Arteta has not been sentimental about it. "Bukayo gives this team its identity," the Spaniard said afterwards. "When he plays like that, we are very, very hard to beat. But this is the squad's night, not just one player's." He had a point. Trossard's persistence created the goal. Rice was immense again - 12 ball recoveries, the most by any Arsenal midfielder in a Champions League knockout match this decade. Merino, much-debated when he arrived from Real Sociedad, has played his way into a defining role at exactly the right moment of the season.

Defensive discipline that finally paid

The numbers behind the clean sheet matter too. Arsenal have now conceded just five goals in 13 Champions League matches in 2025/26 - fewer than any other side left in the competition this stage of the season. Saliba and Gabriel started together for the 28th time in all competitions; the centre-back pair has lost just twice. Raya finished with five saves, none more important than the low stop from

Griezmann after the hour.

Arsenal 1-0 Atletico Madrid: Budapest beckons

The Gunners now wait to see who they will face in Budapest on 30 May. Holders Paris Saint-Germain travel to the Allianz Arena on Wednesday night with a 5-4 cushion from a record-breaking first leg in Paris. PSG's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembele scored twice apiece in that 5-4 thriller and either side would represent a serious test of Arsenal's young, resilient project. Vincent Kompany's Bayern have the home crowd, the Bundesliga title in their pocket, and the motivation of having matched the holders blow-for-blow at the Parc des Princes; PSG, meanwhile, would relish the chance to defend their crown.



Source: Arsenal FC official website ([arsenal.com](https://www.arsenal.com))

For Arsenal supporters of a certain vintage, Tuesday's win lands somewhere between catharsis and disbelief. The last time the club reached this stage, Thierry Henry was leading the line, Jens Lehmann was in goal, and Paris was the venue for a 2-1 defeat to Barcelona in the 2006 final. Twenty years on, Arteta's group has the chance to write a different ending. They are the only unbeaten side left in the competition (W11 D3 across all rounds), they have not lost a home European tie since the play-off round, and they have at last shaken off the historical anxiety that always seemed to find them in May.

What Arsenal 1-0 Atletico Madrid means for the rest of the season

There are still loose ends in the Premier League – though Arteta's side are six points clear with three matches to play, the title race is not over until the maths says it is, and a tricky run-in awaits. But the European picture is now clear. Arsenal will fly to Hungary in the third week of May, finalise their travelling fan allocation, and prepare for the biggest night in modern Arsenal history. After two decades of false dawns, semi-final heartbreaks and quarter-final ambushes, the Gunners are 90 minutes from the European Cup. For more on this season's run-in, see our [Champions League semi-final second leg preview](#), our [El Clasico title decider analysis](#), and the rest of our [Sports coverage](#).

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