

Arsenal v Dortmund: Raya Out, Kepa Tested in Champions League

Description

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Arsenal v Dortmund is Tuesday nightâ??s headline at the Emirates, a Champions League matchday 5 tie between two sides chasing the top eight. Kick-off is 8pm UK time (4am Wednesday in Singapore), and Mikel Arteta must manage it without David Raya, Bukayo Saka and Martin Zubimendi.



Source: Arsenal FC official website (arsenal.com)

Arsenal v Dortmund: where the two sides stand

Arsenal arrive third in the league phase on 10 points after three wins and a draw from four. They won 1-0 at Napoli, beat Lille 3-0 at home, drew 2-2 at Bayern Munich and won 2-1 at Slavia Prague earlier this month. Eight goals scored and three conceded tells you who they are: sharp at one end, mostly secure at the other.

Dortmund sit 12th on nine points, with three wins and one defeat. They are also top of the Bundesliga under Niko Kovac and, according to Arsenalâ??s own preview, have lost only once in all competitions this season. A win for the visitors would lift them above Arsenal in the table, so this is no friendly.

That said, Arsenal have the home edge. The Gunners have not lost in 19 Champions League matches, bar the 2025 final shoot-out defeat to PSG, and they sit top of the Premier League. The 2-2 draw at Newcastle on Saturday ended a run of five straight league wins, and you can read our Newcastle 2-2 Arsenal report for how Noni Madueke rescued a point.

Raya out, Kepa and Meslier on standby

The big team news is in goal. Raya hurt himself against Newcastle and will miss the Dortmund game. Arteta said it â??doesnâ??t look too seriousâ?• and that surgery is not needed, which was the main fear because it would have kept him out for months. More tests will follow.

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Source: Arsenal FC official website (arsenal.com)

Kepa Arrizabalaga and Illan Meslier are the cover, and Arteta praised both. Kepa is the likelier starter. Neither has the rhythm of Raya, so do not be surprised if Dortmund test the goalkeeper early with crosses and set pieces.

Set pieces are the other worry. Arteta admitted that every time Arsenal concede in that manner it is disappointing and â??we need to raise the levelâ?•. Dortmund have size and delivery, and they will fancy their chances from dead balls.

Other absentees and likely changes

Saka is out with a muscle problem and Zubimendi has a hamstring injury. Several previews expect Arteta to rotate, with up to five changes from the Newcastle side. That may mean fresh legs in midfield and attack, and Madueke should keep his place. Arteta says he is â??becoming decisive in gamesâ?•, and the club notes he already has six goal involvements this season.

Dortmund: dangerous, and with an Arsenal connection

Arteta was full of praise for Dortmund, pointing to their league position and their Champions League form. â??But we play at home in front of our crowd,â?• he said, â??and now weâ??re going to go and attack the game, thatâ??s for sure.â?• He also remembers how Dortmund beat Arsenal 3-2 in a pre-season friendly at the Emirates.

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Source: Arsenal FC official website (arsenal.com)

Serhou Guirassy is a fitness doubt, so Fabio Silva is expected to lead the line. Silva scored and assisted in Dortmundâ??s win over Real Betis, and he is in form. Ethan Nwaneri is on loan at Dortmund from Arsenal and is eligible to face his parent club, but he is expected to start on the bench. Artetaâ??s message to him was simple: coming from Arsenal gives you no advantage, you must earn it.

Jobe Bellingham is also in the Dortmund squad, and Arteta called the Bellingham brothers â??two amazing footballersâ?•. Judeâ??s Real Madrid visit Dortmund on 9 December, which adds a family subplot to a busy winter.

History and what to watch

The clubs have met eight times, all in the Champions League group stage. Arsenal have won four and Dortmund three, and in 2014/15 they traded 2-0 home-and-away wins: Dortmund won in Germany, then Arsenal won in London. Arsenal have won three of their four home meetings, the exception being a 2-1

defeat in 2013/14, so the pattern favours the hosts.

Dortmundâ??s record against English clubs is poor. They have lost eight of their last nine away matches against English opposition, and their latest game against an English club was a 2-0 defeat at Tottenham. Also, none of Arsenalâ??s 46 matches against German clubs has ended goalless, so expect goals.



Source: Arsenal FC official website (arsenal.com)

Three things to watch

- **The goalkeeper:** how Kepa handles crosses and early pressure.
- **Midfield control:** Declan Rice and company must stop Dortmund breaking at pace.
- **Set pieces:** Arsenalâ??s recent leaks from corners and free kicks.

Elsewhere on the night, Manchester City host Napoli at the Etihad, which we previewed in our Man City v Napoli Champions League preview. Wherever you follow it, this is a game Arsenal should win, but Dortmund have the quality to make them work. For more of our coverage, visit the Little Big Red Dot sports section.

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