



Aston Villa vs Tottenham Preview: Emery Eyes Champions League, Spurs Battle Drop At Villa Park

Description

Aston Villa vs Tottenham at Villa Park on Sunday 3 May 2026 is the very definition of a fixture with everything to play for. Unai Emery's fifth-placed Villa, eyeing Champions League qualification, host an 18th-placed Tottenham side scrapping for their Premier League lives. Two clubs with European pedigree, two managers under wildly different pressures, one stadium primed for a memorable May afternoon.

Aston Villa vs Tottenham preview: the stakes at Villa Park

Villa enter the match on 58 points in fifth, level on points with Newcastle and Chelsea above and just three behind fourth-placed Manchester United. Emery's side know that two wins from their final games would all but guarantee a return to the Champions League, while a slip-up could see them tumble into the Europa Conference League play-off positions. Yet attention this week has just as much been on Thursday's bruising 1-0 first-leg defeat at Nottingham Forest in the Europa League semi-final, where Chris Wood's 71st-minute penalty handed the Tricky Trees the early advantage ahead of the return at Villa Park on 7 May.



Source: *Aston Villa FC official website (avfc.co.uk)*

Spurs's situation is even more existential. Roberto De Zerbi's side, 18th on 34 points, sit two points adrift of safety with three games to go. Their 1-0 win at Wolves on 25 April – Joao Palhinha's 82nd-minute poke from a Richarlison corner – was their first Premier League victory of 2026 and ended a 15-game winless run. Crucially, however, West Ham's 2-1 win over Everton meant that lifeline did not lift them out of the bottom three.

Team news: Villa's depth, Spurs' injury crisis

Emery confirmed at Friday's press conference that Amadou Onana, Boubacar Kamara and Alysson Edward remain unavailable. Otherwise the Spaniard has the rare luxury of a near-full squad and is expected to recall Ollie Watkins, Morgan Rogers and Marco Asensio after rotating during the European tie. Lucas Digne is suspended in Europe but available in the league, while Marcus Rashford is pushing for a recall after impressing against Forest.

For Tottenham the picture could hardly be more brutal. Xavi Simons is out for the season with a cruciate ligament rupture suffered at Molineux. Dominic Solanke is at risk of missing the rest of the campaign with a hamstring injury, while Cristian Romero, Ben Davies, Guglielmo Vicario, Mohammed Kudus, Dejan Kulusevski and Wilson Odobert are all sidelined. De Zerbi will likely lean on the spine that delivered at Wolves: Antonin Kinsky in goal, Pedro Porro and Djed Spence as wing-backs, Joao Palhinha and Yves Bissouma anchoring midfield, Conor Gallagher driving forward, with Mathys Tel and Richarlison expected to lead the line.



Source: Tottenham Hotspur FC official website (tottenhamhotspur.com)

Tactical battle: Villa Park's pressing trap

Emery has been Tottenham's tormentor-in-chief in this fixture. Villa have lost just one of their last five home meetings with Spurs, and Emery's pressing schemes have frequently overwhelmed midfields built around possession. With Bissouma carrying yellow-card baggage and Palhinha preferred as a defensive shield, the Lilywhites lack a true progressor between the lines now that Simons is gone.

Expect Villa to press high on Kinsky, with Watkins and Rogers funnelling passes wide where Pedro Porro and Spence have shown vulnerability without cover. Set-pieces will also matter: Pau Torres and Ezri Konsa have combined for nine league goals this season and Spurs have conceded eight from corners. At the other end, De Zerbi's side will need Tel's pace in transition, and Conor Gallagher's late runs to threaten an Emi Martinez who has already been beaten 38 times this season.



Source: Tottenham Hotspur FC official website (tottenhamhotspur.com)

Predictions and what's at stake

Opta's supercomputer makes Aston Villa heavy favourites at 61.5 per cent, with a draw rated at 20.3 per cent and a Spurs win at just 18.2 per cent. The numbers feel about right. Villa are unbeaten in seven Premier League matches at Villa Park, scoring at least twice in five of those, while Tottenham have won only one of their last 14 league outings on the road.

Yet relegation battles produce the strangest outcomes. Spurs played with ferocious intensity at Wolves, and De Zerbi will demand the same. If Palhinha can again disrupt the rhythm, and if Tel's runs find Gallagher in pockets, an upset is not impossible. The likelihood, though, is a controlled Villa performance that closes in on Champions League qualification while leaving Tottenham staring at the trapdoor.

Prediction: Aston Villa 2-0 Tottenham. Watkins and Rogers to score, Spurs wait for safety to extend into matchday 37.

Kick-off is 6pm local time (1am SGT, Monday 4 May). For more weekend coverage, see our [Sports section](#).

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