Manchester Unitedâ??s one win in nine, and the Anfield night that decides the top

Description

Manchester United have spent nine games proving that one good half is not a season. They are 17th on seven points, one win from nine, and out of the bottom three only because Crystal Palaceâ??s goal difference is seven worse. At Stamford Bridge on Saturday they were the better side for 45 minutes and lost 2-0.

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Cole Palmer scores from the penalty spot to make it 2-0 for Chelsea against Manchester United at Stamford Bridge on 31 October 2026. Photo: Chelsea FC

The table is blunt about where the problem sits. United have scored 10, conceded 15 and kept no clean sheets. They have not won away all season: beaten at Hull City and Chelsea, held at Everton, Fulham and Leeds United. Four of their nine matches have been draws.

The drop is a cliff rather than a slide. United finished third last season on 71 points with 20 wins from 38. Brighton are third now on 19 points with 24 goals, and only seven sides have scored fewer than Unitedâ??s 10.

Eight matches done, and the biggest one still to come

Gameweek 9 has two matches left, and neither is on tonight. Liverpool host Arsenal at Anfield on Sunday 1 November at 4.30pm UK time, which is 12.30am on Monday 2 November in Singapore. Newcastle United against Everton follows at 4am on Tuesday.

Saturday rearranged the top without settling it. Manchester City lost 1-0 at home to Brighton, Tottenham beat Crystal Palace 2-0 and Aston Villa drew 1-1 with Fulham. Arsenal are second on 21 from eight, level with City having played one fewer. Liverpool are fifth on 15.

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Liverpool against Brighton at Anfield on 25 October 2026, a 2-0 win. Photo: Liverpool FC

Arsenal bring the best defence in the league

Mikel Artetaâ??s side have conceded five in eight games and kept five clean sheets. Brighton have let in seven, Leeds United and Liverpool eight each. They have won seven of eight, the only blemish a 3-0 defeat at Brighton on 19 September, which accounts for three of the five.

Away they are just as tight: 1-0 at Aston Villa, 2-0 at Sunderland, 1-0 at Nottingham Forest and that 3-0 loss at the Amex. Every away goal they have conceded came in one afternoon.

The attacking numbers are more modest. Arsenal have scored 13, seventh in the division, and reached three in a league game only once, the 3-0 win over Coventry City on opening weekend. They win narrowly and often, which is a title formula only while the defending holds.

Liverpool celebrate the second goal in their 2-0 win over Brighton at Anfield on 25 October 2026. Photo: Liverpool FC

Liverpool have the opposite problem

Andoni Iraolaâ??s side have scored 11 in eight and conceded eight, with four clean sheets. The defence is nearly as good as Arsenalâ??s. The attack is nowhere near it. Two of three draws came at Anfield, 2-2 with Nottingham Forest and 0-0 with Fulham. The third was 2-2 at Newcastle United.

Their other Anfield results are a 2-0 win over Brighton last week and a 3-0 defeat by Manchester City on 11 October, the one afternoon the defensive record fell apart. Away they have won all three, at Ipswich Town, Bournemouth and Brentford. They also arrive off a cup night, beating Chelsea 6-5 on penalties after a 1-1 draw on 28 October, with Joe Gomez scoring the decisive kick.

What each result does

If Liverpool win, they go fourth on 18, above Chelsea on goal difference, and Arsenal stay second on 21 behind City on goal difference. A draw sends Arsenal top on 22 and puts Liverpool fourth on 16. An Arsenal win takes them top on 24, four clear of City, and leaves Liverpool fifth on 15.

None of it touches United, 17th whatever happens at Anfield. They host Aston Villa at 12.30am on Monday 9 November, go to Liverpool at 12.30am on Monday 23 November, then host Brentford at 11pm on Saturday 28 November. Two of the three are at Old Trafford, and that is where any rescue has to start.

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Mikel Arteta celebrates Arsenalâ??s 2-1 win over Chelsea at the Emirates on 6 September 2026. Photo: Arsenal FC

Gameweek 10 opens on Saturday 7 November with Everton against Coventry City at 4am, then Leeds United against Tottenham Hotspur at 8.30pm and Arsenal against Hull City at 11pm. United play on the Monday night, under a different kind of pressure.

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