

Nottingham Forest 3-2 Chelsea: Gibbs-White double, Emegha brace in vain

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Nottingham Forest 3-2 Chelsea was a Friday night that tilted on a fifth-minute volley and never quite tilted back. Morgan Gibbs-White scored twice, Emmanuel Emegha struck twice for the visitors, and Xabi Alonsoâ??s Chelsea slipped to a third straight Premier League defeat on a bitterly cold night at the City Ground.



Goalmouth action during Nottingham Forest 3-2 Chelsea. Source: Chelsea FC official website (chelseafc.com)

Nottingham Forest 3-2 Chelsea: how the night unfolded

Jesusâ??s volley sets the tone

Chelsea wanted a solid start. They got five minutes of one. Daniel Munoz swung a cross in from the right and Igor Jesus met it flush on the volley, the ball flying into the top corner. It was the sort of finish that silences a visiting end and lifts a home one.

To their credit, Chelsea settled. They took control of possession and pushed Forest back, but the hosts dropped into a back five without the ball and the Blues struggled to find a way through. Romeo Lavia started the best move of the half with an incisive pass, ending with a deflected shot wide, and not much else threatened before the break. Alonso had made three changes to his starting XI, bringing in Jordan Henderson, Pedro Neto and Danny Welbeck, with captain Moises Caicedo dropping into central defence alongside Wesley Fofana.

A penalty and a quick reply

Alonso sent on Emegha for Welbeck at half-time, but history repeated itself. Forest scored early in the half again. Delap drove into the box, was felled by Fofana, and Gibbs-White sent Emiliano Martinez the wrong way from 12 yards on 51 minutes.

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Chelsea answered almost at once. Netoâ??s pass from the right was cutely dummied by Palmer into Rogersâ?? path, he flicked it on to Neto, and the shot was deflected into Emeghaâ??s path. The Dutch striker controlled it instinctively and finished with his left foot. VAR checked for offside and confirmed the goal, and Colwill replaced Fofana once the goal stood.



A midfield duel in Nottingham Forest 3-2 Chelsea. Source: Chelsea FC official website (chelseafc.com)

Emeghaâ??s brace gives Chelsea hope, but not a point

For a spell, Chelsea looked the more dangerous side. James McAtee had a presentable chance to restore Forestâ??s two-goal lead but could not summon the power to test Martinez, and the goalkeeper then did well to keep out a strike from Murillo through a crowd. From a corner in front of the travelling support, Henderson picked out an unmarked Rogers 12 yards out, but his volley skewed wide.

That miss proved costly. On 72 minutes Xaver Schlager slipped a reverse pass into Gibbs-Whiteâ??s path and the Forest captain dinked it over Martinez for his second. It was 3-1, and the little momentum Chelsea had built went with it.

Marco Palestra and Geovany Quenda came on with five minutes of normal time left, and the Blues finally found a second wind. Neto crossed, Emegha steered a superbly directed header past Matz Sels, and the City Ground was suddenly nervous. Chelsea laid siege to the home goal in stoppage time and Quenda had the best chance to level, but Sels held his effort comfortably.

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Xabi Alonso, whose Chelsea side lost 3-2 at Nottingham Forest. Source: Chelsea FC official website (chelseafc.com)

Alonsoâ??s verdict: low confidence, hard questions

This was Chelseaâ??s third consecutive league defeat, and the clubâ??s own match report notes it was their first loss in that corner of the Midlands since 1997. Henderson, Alonso and Neto were all booked, with Delap picking up Forestâ??s only yellow card, in front of a crowd of 30,851 with Andrew Madley refereeing.

Alonso did not dodge the problem afterwards. â??I think we are low in confidence; you see that the team is struggling to hold a result,â?• he said. â??After getting [a goal back for] the 2-1, we then conceded the 3-1 just when we had a little bit of boost from the goal.â?• He added that at this level, â??you need to hold results and you donâ??t have to concede that muchâ?•.

The managerâ??s call was for unity. â??We have to stick together,â?• he said. â??We need to go through this storm all together.â?• It is the right message, but the numbers are blunt: Chelsea conceded first inside five minutes, conceded again within six minutes of the restart, and then gave up a third just as they were gaining belief. Our Forest v Chelsea preview asked whether Alonsoâ??s side could show a reaction. For long stretches, they could not.

What it means and what comes next

Chelsea remain eighth in the Premier League table ahead of the rest of the weekendâ??s action. For Forest, it was a night of clean execution: an early goal, a back five that squeezed the space, and a captain who kept his composure from the spot and again from open play.

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The Blues do not have long to respond. Crystal Palace visit Stamford Bridge on Wednesday evening, and Liverpool arrive next Saturday, 5 December. Liverpool, meanwhile, are at Goodison Park this weekend, which we previewed in our Everton v Liverpool preview, and the title race is also being shaped at the Emirates, as covered in our Arsenal v Man City preview.

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