

Stingy defence, set-piece prowess and Rice's form help Gunners cross the line

Faith in Arteta pays off for Arsenal

Guardiola deflects questions on future

ANGSHUMAN ROY

Calcutta: Finally, the jinx is broken for Arsenal. After 22 years, Arsenal are Premier League champions again.

Twenty-two years! Liverpool had waited 30 years (1990 to 2020), Napoli had lifted the Serie A title after 33 years (1990 to 2023). The last time Arsenal held the Premier League title was in 2004. And this memorable title came on a day when they were not even playing.

Manchester City's 1-1 draw at Bournemouth was enough for Mikel Arteta's men to seal the deal. The result meant City, on 78 points, cannot reach Arsenal's 82 even if they log three points on the last matchday on Sunday.

A team that had earned the dubious sobriquet of 'Goners' for its consistent failures is Gunners again, firing on all cylinders. Critics have been silenced, and, on May 30, if they go past Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final, it will be a double slap on all those who had doubted Arteta and had ridiculed Arsenal.

This title also shows that if you have faith in a coach and back him to the hilt, it pays off. The Arsenal management never flinched, even when results were not coming. The only silverware under Arteta before this league success was the FA Cup triumph in 2020.

In 2019-20, Arteta's Arsenal finished eighth, and the



Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta acknowledges the applause during the lap of appreciation after the Burnley match on May 18. It was Arsenal's last home match of the season. (Reuters)

improvement can be gauged from the fact that from 2022-23 to 2024-25, the Gunners were runners-up for three consecutive seasons. In the 2021-22 season, Arsenal had lost their opening three games without scoring a goal, including a 0-5 hammering at Manchester City.

Thierry Henry had blasted Arteta, who had taken over from Unai Emery in 2019, after yet another trophy-less season last year. But there was no denying the fact that Arsenal improved in leaps and bounds under the Spaniard despite a series of near misses. It was a matter of time, and it came on Tuesday.

"From Highbury seats to the Emirates — Arsenal Nation, finally, we can celebrate. Special thanks to this generation — finally now my kids saw us winning a title," Henry wrote on Instagram.

One of the things Arteta did last summer was bring in Argentine Gabriel Heinze as his No. 2. The former Argentina and Manchester United side-back has a pit bull-like mentality, and that rubbed off on the team, especially the defenders. That Arsenal did not concede a single penalty drives home the point.

They say it's the defence that wins you a league and not the offence. Arsenal proved that to be true. The central defending duo of William Saliba and Gabriel Magalhaes has started in 26 league games and Arsenal won 17 of those. Their solidity also helped goalkeeper David Raya to record 19 clean sheets so far. Arsenal have conceded just 26 goals so far in the league. That is at least six fewer than any other side.

Arsenal have scored 28 of their 68 goals from dead-ball situations and 18 of them from corners — a Premier League record. For some critics, it was not pleasing to the eye, but in the end, what counts is the marginal gains. It's better to do away with style and em-

STATS THE WAY



Arsenal fans celebrate winning the Premier League outside the Emirates Stadium in London on Tuesday. Arsenal sealed the title after Manchester City failed to beat Bournemouth in an away match. (Getty Images)

Arsenal have won their first league title in 22 years, ending their longest wait for the trophy since their first triumph in 1931.

Declan Rice has played 4,336 minutes in all competitions this season, more than any other Arsenal outfield player.

Only Manchester United and Liverpool, the two 20-time league champions, have won more English top-flight titles than Arsenal. The Gunners have won 14 times.

In the Premier League era, Arsenal have won in 1997-98, 2001-02 and 2003-04.

PREMIER LEAGUE

CHelsea	2
TOTTENHAM	1
BOURNEMOUTH	1
MANCHESTER CITY	1

Bournemouth: Pep Guardiola confronted a heartbreaking end to Manchester City's title bid on Tuesday but avoided any clear answers about his future, saying no decision had been made while warning it would be the wrong moment to make such an announcement.

City's 1-1 draw at Bournemouth on Tuesday extinguished their Premier League challenge in deflating fashion, a late leveller from Erling Haaland arriving too late to keep alive the race and turning Sunday's finale against Aston Villa into little more than perhaps an emotional send-off for Guardiola. Eli Junior Kroupi scored the opener for Bournemouth.

Speculation over his future has only heightened the sense of an era drawing to a close, but Guardiola again refused to be drawn on whether he will step away this summer.

"I could say I have one more year of contract and with conversations I have had for many, many years always from my experience, when you announce whatever you announce during the competition is a bad, bad result," Guardiola told Sky Sports.

"Like you understand the first person I have to talk to is my chairman because we decided when we finish the season we will sit and we will talk. Simple as that. And after we will take the decision."

"Listen, I have one more year contract, I will not tell you here because I have to talk to my chairman, my players, my staff. When we play for the FA

brace steel for the result.

"You have got to find ways of winning, that's part of the job. You can play as good as you like, but winning is the thing that really matters," Everton manager David Moyes had said in defence of his former ward, Arteta.

This season, Arsenal have done another thing that was missing in the past. They did not lose many points against bottom-half teams. Yes, there was a 2-2 draw against now-relegated Wolves in February when they blew a two-goal lead. But overall, they logged 53 points from teams in the bottom half. That's a huge achievement. Take, for example, the 1-0 win against Burnley on Monday. This Arsenal now knows how to eke out three points even when not at its best.

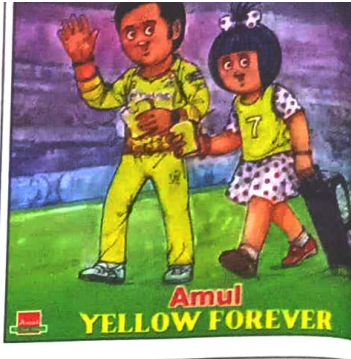
The Premier League triumph also heralded Declan Rice as one of the best midfielders in the world. He has played 4,336 minutes in all

competitions this season, more than any other Arsenal outfield player. "It's not over yet," Rice had said after the loss to Manchester City. "I told you all. It's all done," he said on Tuesday.

Striker Viktor Gyokeres's arrival last summer also helped. At times, the new No. 14 struggled, and as usual, he was being branded as a bully against weaker rivals. Still, he managed 21 goals in all competitions till now and 14 in the league. A very good first sea-



Arsenal players (from left) Declan Rice, Jurrien Timber, Eberechi Eze and Bukayo Saka pose in front of the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday after partying the whole night. (X)



Cup, before we qualify for the Champions League, we play for the Premier League, there is just one thing on my mind and the focus is try to win the team to the highest points and we have done."

Spurs still at risk

Tottenham Hotspur lost 2-1



Eli Junior Kroupi performs a back flip after scoring for Bournemouth during the Premier League match against Manchester City on Tuesday. (Getty Images)

at Chelsea on Tuesday and still face the risk of relegation from the Premier League in their final game of the season this weekend after goals either side of halftime from the home side's Enzo Fernandez and Andrey Santos.

Richardson got one back for Spurs in the 74th minute but the defeat means Tottenham remain two points above West Ham United, who currently occupy the last relegation spot.

However, Spurs have a much better goal difference, meaning a draw at home to Everton on Sunday would all but guarantee their Premier League survival.

Chelsea, fresh from announcing former Real Madrid

coach Xabi Alonso as next manager after a 2025/26 campaign, clinched eighth place, which guarantees a berth in the UEFA Conference League next season.

The Blues are one point behind Brighton & Hove Albion, who currently occupy the top of the Europa League spots.

The win was Chelsea's first in the Premier League since March 4, giving their fans something to celebrate after a miserable run that included six consecutive league defeats. It also means Spurs have only won once at Stamford Bridge since 1990.

TOP 5

Team	P	D	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	37	25	7	5	89
Man City	37	23	9	5	76
United	37	19	11	7	66
Aston Villa	37	18	8	11	54
Liverpool	37	17	8	12	52

Updated till Tuesday's matches