

Seaman's agony as Arsenal capitalise on mistake

Written by Zohaib Ahmed
Monday, 01 September 2003

Arsenal remained the only Premiership team with a 100 per cent record as they summoned Manchester City to a 2-1 defeat, their first at the City of Manchester Stadium.

David Seaman presented his former team-mates with their winning goal after he failed to collect the ball in the box and allowed the Gunners to win after coming from behind.

The supporters in the stands could sense something would happen in the early part of the game after a lively first 10 minutes and it was in the 10th minute when Lauren, tracking back a long ball and under the pressure from Trevor Sinclair, completely miss-controlled the ball and slotted the ball passed his own keeper, a neat goal, but in the wrong net.

It took 20 minutes for Seaman to be tested, with a driving shot from Pires, gathered calmly in to the arms of the former Gunner's keeper as Manchester City looked as if they would get something from the game.

Arsenal dominated in the possession and constantly opened up the home side's defence but Manchester City looked in control of the game, sitting back rather than playing attacking football, but City didn't make any concrete chances as Sibierski and Anelka failed to find the target after constant good build up play from Tarnat and Sinclair.

In the last third of the first half, a long clearance from Lehmann only ended back in City's possession as Sibierski cushioned his header into Anelka's path who out ran Keown and hit a shot at the goal, but the big frame of Lehmann comfortably parried the ball for a corner. This injected Arsenal as they ran attack after attack on City's goal and dominated possession, with Henry having a golden chance to equalise but not being able to get a hold on the ball and Ljungberg, whose shot had to be parried over the bar by the ever-reliant, Seaman.

City's defence were hardly troubled, and got the ball away any way they could, Arsenal built up their play with short passes and breaking away, but couldn't get into to full swing as they were persistently put off. At the back, it was only thanks to Martin Keown, whose wealth of experience and domination stopped City's attacks.

The second half started in the same way as in the first, with good end-to-end play and it was City who could have scored from the re-start but Sibierski failed to find Anelka who was in a great position in the box after a poor pass from Keown. And straight after that, Sinclair's long ball to distain resulted in a cross being scraped away by Toure.

Arsenal's early dominance in possession in the second half paid off as they scored the equaliser when Shaun Wright-Phillips pulled out of a tackle against Pires, who played the ball into Ashley Cole and found Sylvain Wiltord completely unmarked in the box, who continued his scoring run against City with his fourth in five games. From there it was all Arsenal and they could have taken the lead when again the home defence completely switched off, but Ljungberg could only clip the ball over Seaman and the crossbar for a Manchester City goal kick.

Manchester City were a shade of the team from the first half and found it hard to gain any sort of possession until the 60th minute, when they won a corner, which came to nothing.

Sibierski found himself in a great scoring position but hit a tame shot straight at Lehmann, and then within a minute, Anelka beat the offside trap for the first time in the match, finding himself with space and hit a fierce shot, which was saved by the German in the Arsenal goal, City's charge for goal lifted the hushed crowd. Sibierski, who wasted golden chances, was replaced by Danny Tiatto in the 68th minute, who got booked within eight minutes of coming on.

Arsenal took the lead in the 72nd minute through Ljungberg after he and Wiltord combined to set up Pires, but Seaman came out, only to lose control on the ball in a scramble, with Ljungberg getting to the ball first and putting the former champions ahead and subsequently giving Seaman a bitter pill to swallow. Ljungberg's over-celebrating got him a yellow card. The two goal scorers for Arsenal were replaced by Dennis Bergkamp and Ray Parlour.

With 15 minutes to go, City had to look for a chance to avoid their first defeat at the City of Manchester stadium and Keegan brought on Eyal Berkovic and Robbie Fowler, but attack after attack was foiled by Arsenal's back four and time eventually ran out.

Henry could have concreted Arsenal's victory after running free and being in a one-on-one situation with former Gunner Seaman and rounded him, but was beaten by City's defence, who got back to clear the ball and give City some hope.

Arsenal nearly scored another own goal, had the sharp-eyed linesman not lifted his flag as a cross from the right was deflected on to the crossbar by Toure, with just minutes to go.

It was clearly not Henry's day as he just could not get a shot on goal, and when he had the opportunity, the dreaded offside flag was raised.

Robbie Fowler couldn't continue his goal streak against Arsenal with the last chance of the game, but his header looped over the bar and away went the City fans' hopes of remaining unbeaten at their new stadium.

Arsenal put Manchester City, not in the dominating fashion as last season, but a win is worth three points and this is the first time in 56 years that Arsenal have made a perfect start to the season, and have already built up a three point lead over rivals Manchester United.{mos_ri}