

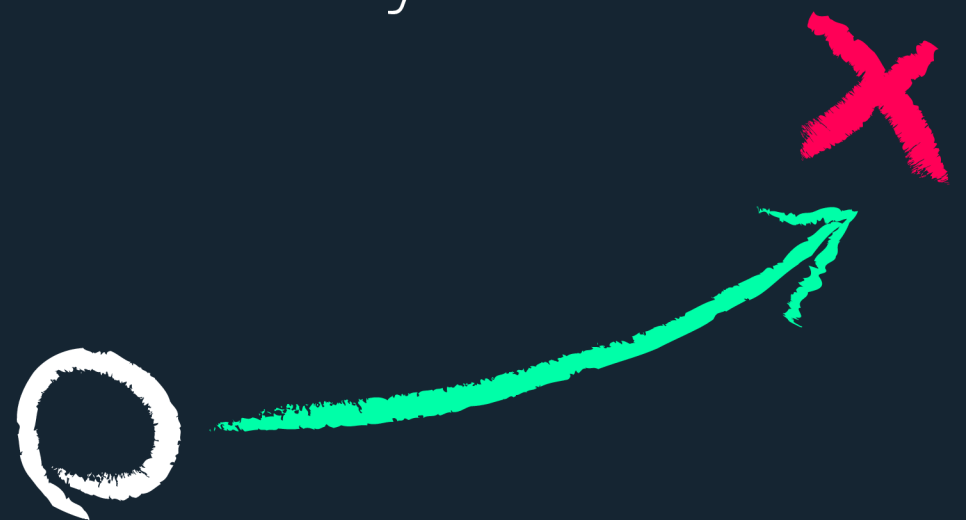
2025/26

# Premier League

## Rest defense

## Analysis

- Who keeps a numerical advantage when they lose the ball deep in the opposition half?
- Who pays the highest price when they don't?





THE METRIC

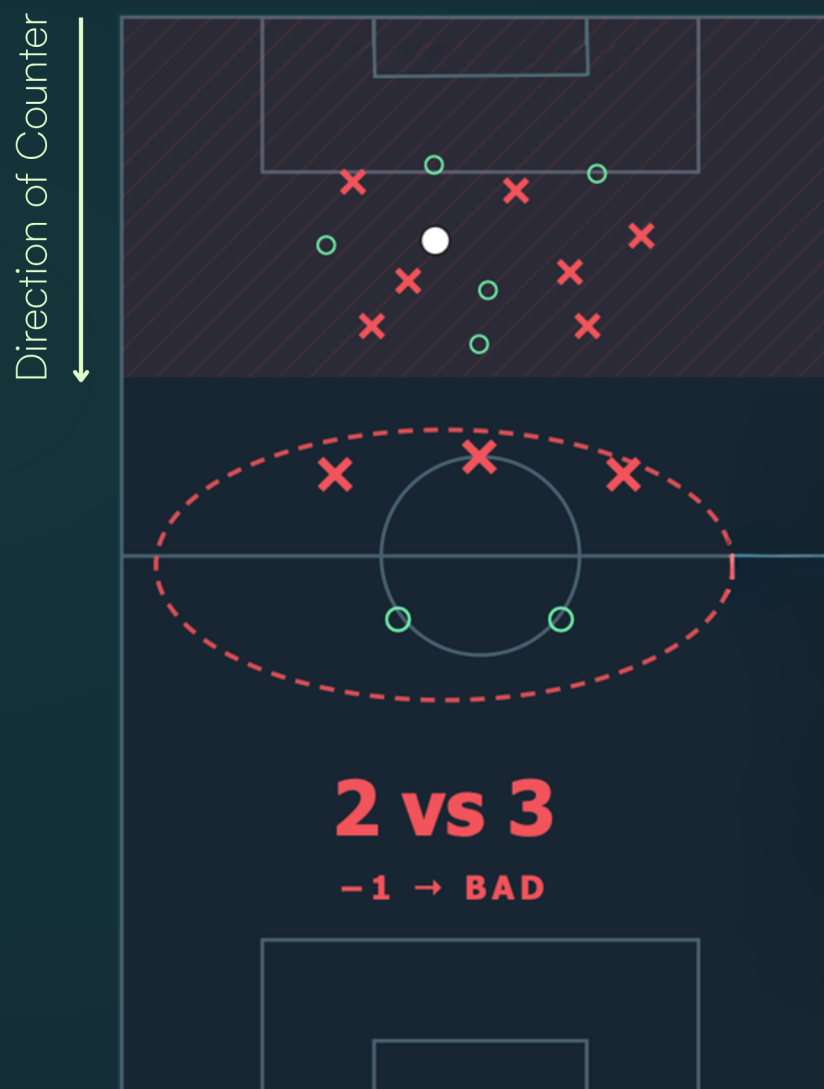
# What is rest defense?

The shape a team keeps behind the ball while attacking. At the second they lose it, two numbers decide whether they're safe. Defensive line vs. the opponent's attacking line.



## GOOD REST DEFENSE

3 vs 2: defending side has 1 more in the counter zone.



## BAD REST DEFENSE

2 vs 3: defending side outnumbered the moment they lose it.

SCOPE



# What we **measured**

One season. One competition. One question: what happens at the precise moment a team loses the ball deep in the final third?

**360**

Premier League 2025/26 games  
with event + tracking data

**1331**

**Real counter starts:** opponent  
interception in their own first third  
followed by a completed pass.

**20**

PL clubs ranked on two metrics:  
**structural** (rest defense %) and **outcome**  
(shots conceded within 15s)

**2**

Numbers from each tracking frame:  
**defensive line** vs. **attacking line**

## **A METRIC NOBODY ELSE BUILDS**






As far as we know, MyGamePlan is the only platform that lets you measure rest defense at scale. Combining synced event data with tracking-data, across a full league season, in a few clicks.








# Who keeps a **good rest defense**?

% of real counter starts (interception + completed pass in opp's first third) where the defending team had at least 1 more player in their last line than the opponents in their attacking line.

## ▲ TOP 5 — MOST SECURE

1	 <b>Everton</b>	1.53 / 1.66	<b>92.2%</b>
2	 <b>Brentford</b>	1.34 / 1.49	<b>89.9%</b>
3	 <b>Crystal Palace</b>	1.32 / 1.47	<b>89.8%</b>
4	 <b>Manchester City</b>	1.93 / 2.15	<b>89.8%</b>
5	 <b>Burnley</b>	1.57 / 1.75	<b>89.7%</b>

## ▼ BOTTOM 5 — MOST EXPOSED

16	 <b>Bournemouth</b>	1.49 / 1.77	<b>84.2%</b>
17	 <b>Sunderland</b>	1.24 / 1.54	<b>80.5%</b>
18	 <b>Brighton &amp; Hove Albion</b>	1.30 / 1.62	<b>80.2%</b>
19	 <b>Wolverhampton Wanderers</b>	0.77 / 1.00	<b>77.0%</b>
20	 <b>Tottenham Hotspur</b>	0.84 / 1.11	<b>75.7%</b>








## OUTCOME






# Who actually gets punished?

% of real counter starts that become a shot against within 15 seconds. Same denominator as slide 4, but different question: structural cover doesn't always equal outcome.

### ▲ TOP 5 — BEST CONTAINMENT

1		<b>Brentford</b>	1 / 60	<b>1.7%</b>
2		<b>Nottingham Forest</b>	2 / 76	<b>2.6%</b>
3		<b>Bournemouth</b>	2 / 71	<b>2.8%</b>
4		<b>Chelsea</b>	2 / 70	<b>2.9%</b>
5		<b>Everton</b>	2 / 66	<b>3.0%</b>

### ▼ BOTTOM 5 — BIGGEST PUNISHMENT

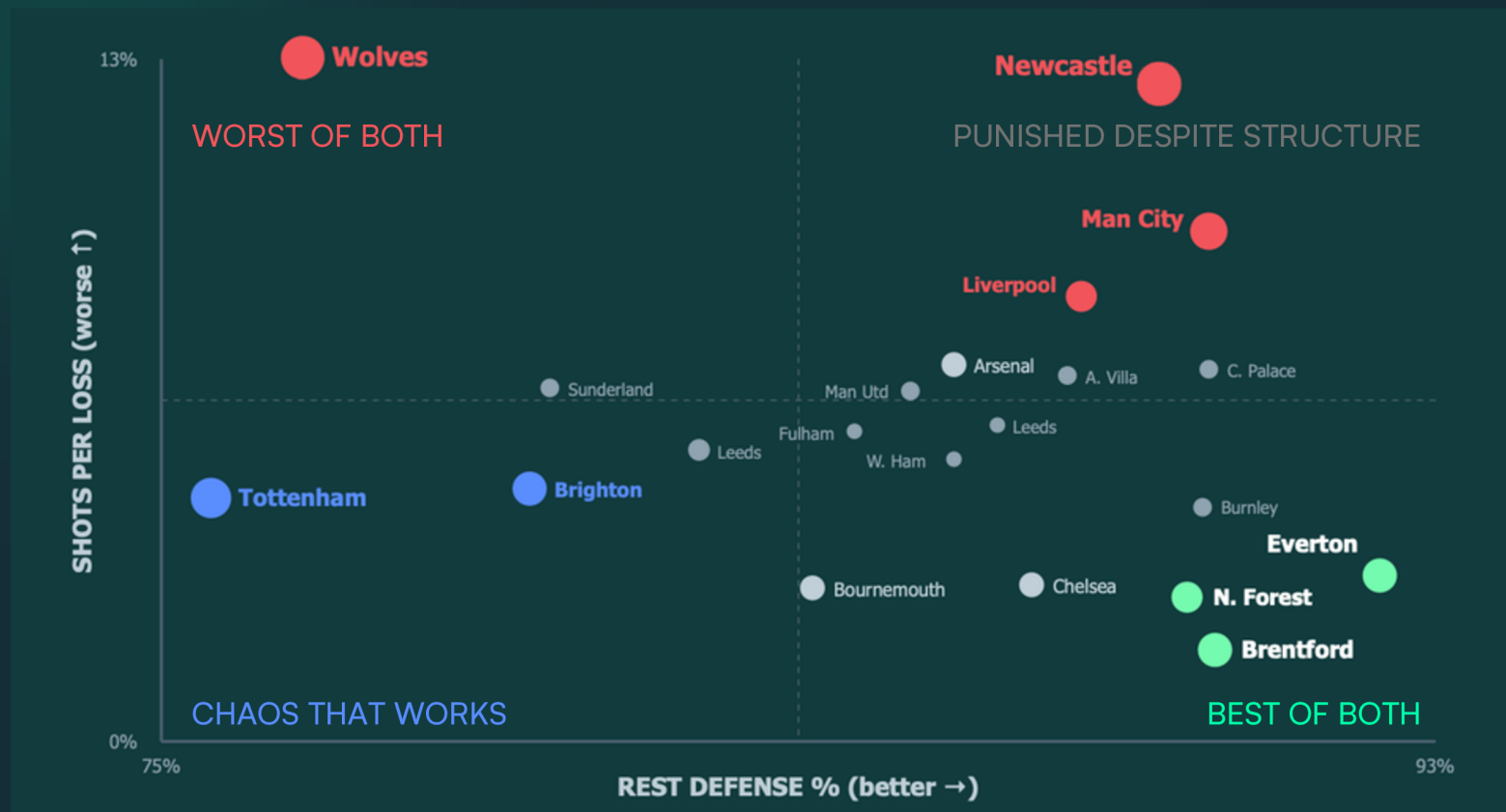
16		<b>Arsenal</b>	5 / 73	<b>6.9%</b>
17		<b>Liverpool</b>	6 / 74	<b>8.1%</b>
18		<b>Manchester City</b>	8 / 86	<b>9.3%</b>
19		<b>Newcastle United</b>	9 / 75	<b>12.0%</b>
20		<b>Wolverhampton Wanderers</b>	5 / 40	<b>12.5%</b>



## STRUCTURE VS OUTCOME

# The four quadrants

A 20-club map of structural strength (x) vs. shot conversion against (y). The diagonals are the boring teams. The off-diagonals are the stories.



### BEST OF BOTH

Brentford, Forest, Everton, Chelsea: strong cover and minimal punishment. The low-block / counter-press schools.

### PUNISHED DESPITE STRUCTURE

Newcastle (12%), Man City (9.3%), Liverpool (8.1%): rest defense is fine, but they pay a price of facing high-quality counters.

### WORST OF BOTH

Wolves: bottom-3 rest defense, league-worst 12.5% shot conversion. Structurally exposed and recovery breaks down.

### CHAOS THAT WORKS

Tottenham, Brighton: worst structural rest defense in the league, but opponents only convert 4-5% into shots. The pressing risk pays off.



# Three patterns the data pulled out

## 1

**The boldest out-of-possession systems are the most exposed structurally.**

Tottenham (75.7%), Wolves (77.0%) and Brighton (80.2%), the three teams whose pressing/positional setups commit the most numbers forward — are the only PL sides below 84% rest defense. They're outnumbered behind the ball most often when a counter starts.

## 2

**But structure doesn't predict outcome.**

Spurs and Brighton have the worst rest defense, but opponents only convert 4-5% of their counter starts into shots. Their pressing intensity wipes out the structural risk. Meanwhile Newcastle (89.1% rest defense, top-7 structure) lets 12% of counter starts become shots.

## 3

**Big-six teams pay the price even when they look fine.**

Man City, Liverpool, Arsenal and Man United are mid-pack in rest defense, but bottom-5 in shot conversion (6.4% - 9.3%). Their opponents on the counter are simply higher quality than the league average, and structural cover alone isn't enough.

YOUR TURN

Ask a tactical question.  
Get the answer in  
seconds.

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