

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?

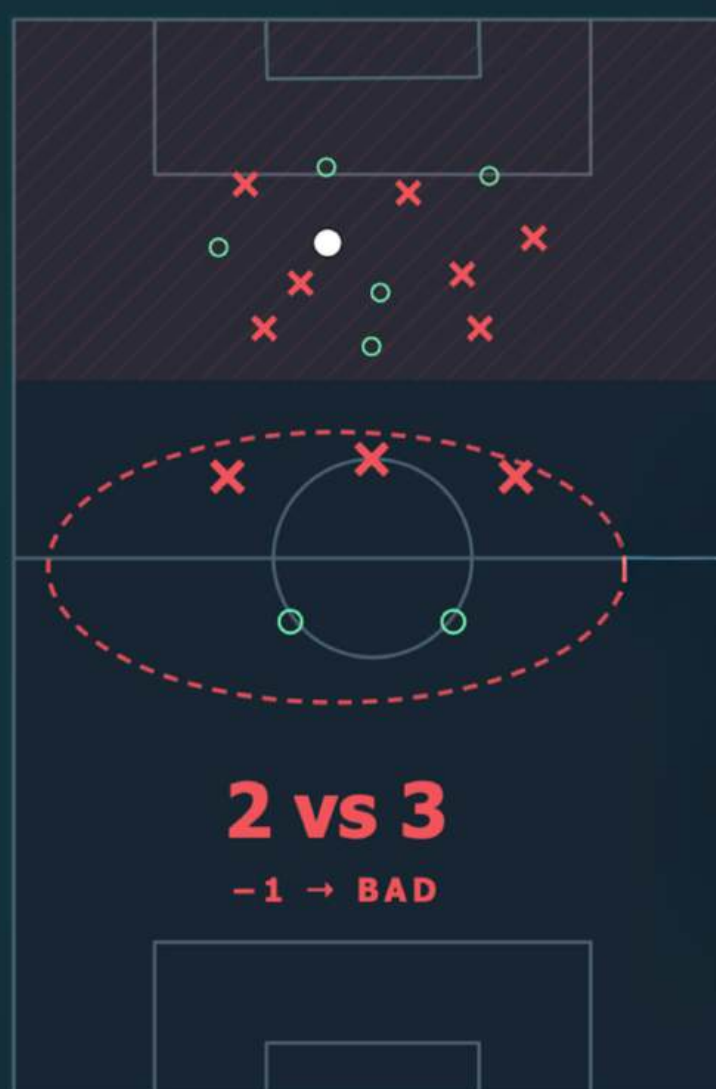
The shape a team keeps behind the ball while attacking. At the second they lose it, two numbers decide whether they're safe. Defensive line vs. the opponent's attacking line.



GOOD REST DEFENSE

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

Direction of Counter
↓



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.



STRUCTURE

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

▼ BOTTOM 5 — MOST EXPOSED

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



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

▼ BOTTOM 5 — BIGGEST PUNISHMENT

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



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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