

DATE: 27/04/25

COMPETITION: FA Cup

OPPOSITION REPORT ON: Nottingham Forrest

STARTING FORMATION: 4-4-2

FIXTURE: Nottingham Forest vs Manchester City

SCORE: 0-2

CONDITIONS: Good pitch and weather conditions

REFEREE: Michael Oliver

RED CARDS: None

LINE UPS:



FORMATION & TACTICAL COMMENTS INCLUDING ANY CHANGES:

Mentality when level:

Forest were compact, disciplined, and focused on maintaining a solid mid-block. In possession they attempted to build through Gibbs-White, looking to find wide runners early. Defensively, the double pivot of Andersen and Danilo dropped close to the centre-backs, often forming a temporary back 5 or 6 to block Manchester City's central combinations. The team stayed cautious, prioritising structure over aggressive pressing.

Mentality when losing:

After conceding the second goal, Forest significantly increased their pressing height, especially through the front three. Wood initiated the press, with Gibbs-White and the wingers closing passing lanes to City's centre-backs. This shift created more transitional moments but also exposed large spaces behind the defence. During this phase, the team evolved into a more aggressive 4-2-4/4-1-4-1 structure, with Milenković pushing higher into midfield to compete physically and close central gaps. While this increased energy, it often broke the defensive line's cohesion.

SUBS MADE:

46' - Elanga (Out: Danilo). Forrest changed their formation to a front 3, instead of 2 in the first half, with CHO going to the left, Elanga to the right and Wood centrally, with Gibbs-White playing behind them

71' - Sangaré (Out: Anderson) and Awoniyi (Out: Wood). Like for like changes with Sangaré playing CM and Awoniyi playing ST

82' – Silva (Out: Dominguez) and Sosa (Out: Abbott). Like for like changes, Abbott subbed because of an injury

IN POSSESSION

Looked to feed Gibbs-White early, using him as the creative outlet between lines.

Preferred direct play toward Wood, who held up and created space for CHO and others.

Generally conservative in buildup; centre-backs avoided risky passes after early turnovers.

WITHOUT THE BALL:

Initially compact mid-block with front three pressing centrally.

Focused on pressing City's centre-backs who advanced high in possession.

Danilo and Andersen frequently dropped deep, forming a back 5/6 to crowd the box and restrict City's short combinations.

After conceding the second goal, Forest began pressing higher and with more intensity, though this created defensive gaps.

GOALKEEPER DISTRIBUTION:

Sels aimed long toward Wood whenever possible.

Comfortable clearing under pressure but made poor decisions when leaving his area (notably on City's 2nd goal).

Inconsistent with distribution accuracy.

DEFENSIVE UNIT COMMENTS (tactical)

Poor composure in buildup - several passes into pressure to Andersen and Gibbs-White.

Full-backs were generally **conservative** in their positioning. Toffolo provided some width on the left and supported forward play effectively, while the Abbott was far less involved, leaving the side unbalanced. When the team attempted to push higher in possession, full-backs stayed narrow to prevent being exposed, meaning overlaps were rare and limited attacking width came from wingers instead.

Murillo prone to stepping out of line and leaving space behind.

Milenkovic stayed higher second half to add strength centrally, but this disrupted structure and left gaps.

MIDFIELD UNIT COMMENTS (tactical)

Andersen & Danilo worked hard defensively, closing spaces and limiting City's midfield creativity early on.

Dominguez failed to match physicality in duels and often mistimed challenges.

Andersen was especially active, strong in tackles, and looked to play forward quickly.

Midfield began to tire and lose compactness after 60 minutes.

FORWARDS UNIT COMMENTS: (tactical)

Pressed aggressively during opposition buildup, especially on goalkeeper restarts.

CHO made dangerous runs but was repeatedly caught offside.

Wood led the line effectively - good pressing angles and spatial awareness, dragged defenders to open spaces for wide players. However, didn't get any dangerous opportunities.

Gibbs-White the main creative spark - composed, varied passing, unlucky with teammates' poor timing. Great decision making and technique, has an amazing passing arsenal and a nearly perfect weight of pass, however, was extremely unlucky with the finishing. Should've ended the game with minimum a goal and assist.

Elanga had a good game as a sub. Immediately changed the tempo of the game and look threatening throughout.

TEAM STRENGTHS:

Nottingham Forest were particularly effective in transition, breaking forward quickly once possession was regained. Gibbs-White played a key role in initiating these counters, showing excellent awareness and passing range to release runners wide or find Wood early. Their ability to turn defence into attack through direct forward passes was one of their most consistent attacking outlets.

The team demonstrated good physical presence across most areas of the pitch. Andersen and Milenkovic provided power and commitment in duels, while the front line worked tirelessly to **press**

and track back. Their discipline in maintaining compact shape during the first half limited City's opportunities between the lines.

The front three, led by Wood, showed good understanding of when to press the opposition centre-backs and goalkeeper, forcing errors and rushed clearances. Their collective work rate allowed Forest to regain possession in advanced areas at times.

When in a mid-block, the team's compactness across the central channel made it difficult for opponents to play through. Andersen and Danilo screened the back line well, particularly in the first half, showing good anticipation and positioning.

TEAM WEAKNESSES:

Overcommitted defenders - space exposed in behind on transitions.

The right flank lacked cohesion between full-back, winger, and holding midfielder, leading to repeated overloads and confusion in marking assignments. This side is particularly susceptible to diagonal switches and overlaps.

Struggled against pace and quick interchanges around the box.

Forest's defenders and midfielders - especially Murillo and Dominguez - looked uncomfortable when pressed. They resorted to hurried clearances or misplaced short passes into congested areas, gifting possession back to the opposition.

Forest's defensive unit often reacted late to sharp one-twos or rotations in the final third. Lack of anticipation and communication between centre-backs and midfielders allowed opponents to create space centrally and wide. This issue was particularly evident when defending City's second goal, where defensive awareness and aggression were both lacking.

PLAYER	POSITION(S) PLAYED	AGE	HEIGHT	FOOT	COMMENTS FROM GAME
Sels	GK	33	6'2	R	Physically strong and tall keeper with commanding presence. Looked uncomfortable when pressed; distribution inconsistent and invited pressure. Poor decision to rush off line for City's second goal, exposing poor judgment and timing. Overall solid shot-stopper but limited composure in buildup.
Toffolo	LB	30	5'10	L	Hard-working, vocal full-back with good stamina and work rate. Showed solid link-up play down the left and effectively minimised Savinho's threat by staying tight and reading 1v1s well ('73' block, '42' clearance). Technically secure on first touch but not overly adventurous going forward. Slight lack of recovery pace against fast wingers but disciplined in positioning.
Milenković	CB	28	6'3	R	Physically imposing centre-back strong in aerial duels. Showed commitment in challenges and improved after halftime. Initially nervous in possession, preferring simple backward passes to avoid risk. Positioned higher in the second half to contest aerials and help midfield, but this disrupted line shape. Good one-on-one defending versus Grealish (e.g. 65'), but limited agility when turning.
Murillo	CB	23	6'0	L	Quick and mobile but inexperienced in decision-making. Often steps out of line to intercept, leaving space in behind. Over-aggressive in timing challenges, which City exploited. Under pressure, rushed passes and looked uncomfortable receiving back passes (49' error). Lacks composure and awareness when defending the box. Can be beaten 1v1 by quick, direct runners.
Abbott	RB	19	5'11	R	Decent physique but poor awareness and concentration. Lost his man on key occasions ('49') and struggled to track diagonal runs. Did not provide width in possession and offered minimal attacking support. Recovery pace average - exposed by overlaps on his side. Needs improvement in defensive positioning and

					decision-making. Both Marmoush and Grealish had a pretty good game against him
Anderse n	CM/DM	23	6'0	R	Very active, physical and box-to-box presence. Broke up play effectively and made several key interceptions. Technically composed under pressure, using forward passes to progress play. Pressed high after halftime, showing excellent stamina and leadership. Contributed both defensively and creatively; Him along Gibbs-White were Forest's most consistent performers.
Danilo	CM/DM	24	5'9	L	Energetic midfielder with good defensive instincts and ball recovery. Supported centre-backs well, forming temporary back five under pressure. However, lacked physical dominance and occasionally slow to release possession. Strong work rate and good tactical awareness in screening space ahead of defence.
Domíngu ez	CM	27	5'8	R	Quick and active in transitions but physically lightweight. Lacked timing and technique in tackles, losing several duels. Tried to link midfield and attack but often rushed decisions. Needs to improve composure and strength to cope with physical midfielders.
Gibbs- White	AM	25	5'6	R	Technically excellent and the main creative outlet. Calm under pressure, strong passing variety (through balls, disguised passes, switches). Rarely misplaced the ball and constantly looked to receive between lines. Orchestrated counter-attacks with vision and timing; unlucky teammates were caught offside. Created chances but missed big opportunities as well. Emotional leader and high work rate in pressing.
Hudson- Odoi	LW/SS	25	5'8	R	Quick, direct winger who looked to drive inside and combine with Gibbs-White. Provided a brilliant pass (46') to set Elanga through. Threatened with pace but offside timing poor. Worked hard defensively but could improve decision-making in final third. Technically clean first touch and dribbling in tight spaces.

Wood	ST	33	6'2	R	Strong, physical target man who led press effectively from the front. Excellent aerial presence, holding up play and drawing defenders to create space for wingers. Limited mobility and pace restrict threat behind defences. Intelligent positioning and pressing angles helped Forest stay compact. Reliable focal point but isolated at times due to slow midfield support.
SUBS USED					
Elanga	RW	23	5'8	R	Came on and provided instant pace and direct running. Missed clear chance immediately after coming on but carried the ball forward with intent. Delivered dangerous crosses (79'). Energetic on transition, added width and unpredictability. Needs sharper decision-making near goal
Sangaré	CM	27	6'2	R	Technically sound passer with excellent long-ball range. Looked to exploit wide areas early with diagonals. Physically strong but didn't fully influence tempo. Effective in recycling possession under pressure.
Awoniyi	ST	28	6'0	R	Replaced Wood on 70'. Added physicality but struggled to find positioning in the box (e.g. 79'). Limited service but good movement off the ball. Offers more pace than Wood yet less composure in link-up play.
Silva	RB	26	5'8	R	Energetic cameo, tracked Doku tightly and provided overlapping support. Defended well in limited time. Showed willingness to carry the ball forward. Promising but brief appearance.
Sosa	LB/LWB	27	5'8	R	Came on 82'. Made one excellent forward run (84') creating danger before being flagged offside. Energetic and confident with the ball, but too late to change game outcome.

SET PIECES

ATTACKING CORNERS LEFT:

2 corners won, but all taken from the right

DEFENSIVE CORNERS:

9:42 In swinging kick aiming far post for someone to box crash but nobody in the zone. Picked up by Savinho but misplaced the pass

18:42 In swinging kick aiming the goal area cleared by Abbott

50:18 Conceded a goal. In swinging kick to the same area. Found Guardiol who was poorly marked by Murillo and struck the ball uncontested. Sels also came off his line too late. Poor communication and man marking by Forrest.

62:15 In swinging kick cleared by Murillo. Resulted in a dangerous pass by Grealish to Marmoush who made a good attempt but saved by Sels.

63:00 Marmoush played it short to Grealish, got the ball back and delivered it short to O'Reilly. Cleared by Dominguez.

73:30 Delivered into the 6 yard box and cleared by Dominguez

ATTACKING CORNERS RIGHT:

92:06 – Outswinging kick taken by Elanga. Murillo and Awonyi go wider to the left, while Gibbs-White and Sangare go near post where the cross was headed. Jota's strike was cleared near post.

92:27 – Delivered too wide outside the box and resulting in another cross. Cleared by Ortega

ATTACKING FREE KICKS LEFT (IN HIGH AREAS):

23:57 Accurate and high delivery by Murillo found Milnekovic who was caught offside

91:38 Similar delivery by Murillo found Milenkovic again, who passed the ball down the middle to the 6 yard box. Cleared by Gvardiol

ATTACKING FREE KICKS RIGHT (IN HIGH AREAS):

All attacking free kicks played from the left

ATTACKING FREE KICKS CENTRE (IN HIGH AREAS):

All attacking free kicks played from the left

THROW INS:

Usually taken short. Looking for a free option, rather than throwing it forward or backward

TEAMS BEST AERIAL PLAYERS: Wood, Andersen

TEAMS QUICKEST PLAYERS: Hudson-Odoi, Elanga

STRONGEST PLAYERS: Andersen, Milenkovic, Murillo

MOST TECHNICAL/CREATIVE PLAYERS: Gibbs-White

BEST CROSSERS OF THE BALL: Elanga, Gibbs-White, Toffolo

ANYONE WHO IS A THREAT FROM RANGE: Gibbs-White, Hudson-Odoi, Elanga

ANYONE IN PARTICULAR WHO SHOULD BE CLOSED DOWN QUICKLY: Gibbs-White (central creativity), wide players (CHO, Elanga)

MAIN GOAL THREAT(S): Wood, Gibbs-White, Elanga, Hudson-Odoi

WHAT REGULAR PLAYER(S) MISSED THE GAME THROUGH INJURY/SUSPENSION IF ANY?

Ola Aina (RB) was injured / out: Aina had a hamstring injury.

WAYS TO BEAT THEM / STOP THEM THREATENING

Forest's centre-backs, particularly Murillo, often step out aggressively to intercept, leaving large gaps in behind. Well-timed diagonal runs or through balls can consistently expose this weakness, especially when their full-backs are caught high.

Forest struggle under pressure. Sels, Murillo, and Domínguez in particular become rushed, playing into crowded areas or clearing loosely. A coordinated high press will create turnovers in dangerous positions.

Deny Gibbs-White time on the ball. Almost all creative play runs through him. Man-marking him, screening passing lanes into his feet, or engaging him quickly reduces Forest's ability to transition and limits the threat to wide runners. When he is removed from the game, Forest struggle to create chances.

Force play wide and double up on wingers. Hudson-Odoi and Elanga rely heavily on pace and 1v1 dribbles. Doubling up early, preventing them from cutting inside, and forcing them toward the sideline drastically reduces their effectiveness. Their success rate drops sharply when unable to attack at speed.

Use pace and direct runners to isolate centre-backs. Neither Murillo nor Milenković are agile enough to defend in big spaces. Quick attackers can beat them 1v1 or force them into fouling positions. Spreading the pitch and pulling them out of the line is key.

GAME SUMMARY:

Nottingham Forest entered the match with a clear tactical plan: stay compact in a 4-2-3-1 and break quickly through transitions led by Gibbs-White, Hudson-Odoi, and later Elanga. Early on, Forest looked organised and created several promising counter-attacking situations, but an early Manchester City goal disrupted their rhythm and forced them to abandon their initial tempo and structure far earlier than planned. This moment significantly changed the dynamics of the game.

Despite the setback, Forest's counter-attacks were highly effective. They repeatedly exploited City's high defensive line, with Gibbs-White and Elanga producing three very dangerous moments that should have resulted in goals. Forest were extremely unlucky with their finishing, failing to convert chances that would have brought them level or shifted momentum. Their attacking plan was visibly working - particularly in transition - but they lacked the final execution.

Defensively, Forest struggled with City's quick interchanges around the box, and the second goal proved costly. Murillo failed to track Gvardiol's movement, leaving too much space, while Sels made a poor decision to rush off his line, allowing City to extend their lead. These moments reflected the defensive shakiness that ultimately prevented Forest's strong transitional play from having an impact on the scoreline.