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Europa League semi-final preview: Could there be an all-English final?

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The Europa League's final four are confirmed. That's right, Arsenal, Manchester United, Roma and Villarreal have booked their places in the semi-finals of Europe's secondary club competition and it's all to play for ahead of next month's final, which will take place at the Stadion Miejski in Gdańsk on May 26th.

According to the [bet exchange](#), Man United, who won their maiden Europa League title by beating Ajax in 2017, are the favourites to lift the trophy again this year. However, given the calibre of the remaining teams, Ole Gunnar Solskjær's side winning the title isn't nailed on just yet, and Mikel Arteta's Arsenal could have other ideas should the two old foes meet in the final – which is a real possibility at this stage!

So, let's delve straight into the action and pick the bones out of the two semi-final encounters, which will see Manchester United take on Serie A side Roma, and La Liga outfit Villarreal clash with Arsenal. Read on to find out more!

Manchester United vs Roma

Roma's progression to this stage wasn't as comfortable as Manchester United's. The Italian side faced a dogged Ajax in the quarter-finals, and the Amsterdam-based outfit were never going to go down without a fight. Roma fought back from a goal down to win 2-1 at the Johan Cruyff Arena and a 1-1 draw at the Stadio Olimpico was enough to book their place in the semis. For the Red Devils, two 2-0 victories over Granada made for a rather easy quarter-final encounter. Whilst Man United fans would settle for more of the same in the semi-finals, the neutrals will certainly be hoping for a bit more excitement across the 180 minutes.

The sides last faced each other competitively in Europe back in 2008, when they went head-to-head in the quarter-finals of the Champions League. A Carlos Tevez strike earned United a 1-0 advantage heading into the second leg in Rome, where Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney were on the scoresheet in a 2-0 victory. Manchester United fans will remember that campaign with fond memories as they went on to win their third Champions League title, beating Chelsea in the final, and they will be hoping for similar glory this year!

The first leg will take place at Old Trafford on April 29th before the sides meet again just one week

later (May 6th) at the Stadio Olimpico.

Villarreal vs Arsenal

Arsenal's Premier League form has left a lot to be desired at times this season, and that is a fair reflection of their position in the league table (9th). However, in the Europa League, they have been able to enjoy some consistency and the Gunners getting this far in the competition never really looked in doubt. By no means was Slavia Prague an easy quarter-final draw. After all, the Czech side had knocked out Leicester City and Rangers en route to the last eight. Arteta's side let a 1-0 lead slip in the 94th minute at the Emirates. However, at the Sinobo Stadium, Arsenal fired themselves into a three-goal by half-time and Alexandre Lacazette doubled up on the night with the side's fourth goal.

Villarreal's place in the semi-finals was secured with a 3-1 aggregate win over Dinamo Zagreb. Gerard Moreno's penalty was all that separated the two sides in Croatia. At the Estadio de la Cerámica, Paco Alcácer and Moreno had given Villarreal a 2-0 lead by half-time, making it almost impossible for Zagreb to get back into the game, and despite a glimmer of hope when Mislav Oršić found the net, it was little more than a consolation.

Interestingly, this tie will see Villarreal manager Unai Emery return to face his old employers, who sacked him after an underwhelming 18 months in north London, and we're sure the Spaniard would love to get one over on Arsenal and his successor Arteta.

Arsenal will travel to Spain for the first leg on April 29th, and there's no doubt they will be hoping to score a couple of away goals before welcoming Emery back to the Emirates on May 6th.

Our verdict: Premier League sides Manchester United and Arsenal should be too much to handle for Villarreal and Roma across the two legs. So, for that reason we are backing an all-English final in Gdańsk.

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