

DEAR FOOTBALL FANS

BY DFF STUDIO / THE BEAUTIFUL GAME. THE UGLY DRAMA. THE GLORIOUS BANTER.

PREMIER LEAGUE / EVERTON 0-2 CHELSEA

NINE MONTHS. FINALLY, A CLEAN SHEET.

Dear Football Fans, Chelsea have kept a Premier League clean sheet. Please remain calm. Everton lost 2-0 at the Hill Dickinson Stadium, Pedro Neto scored twice, and the Chelsea defence finally remembered that conceding is not a subscription service.

The previous league shutout came against Brentford on 17 January. Today is 17 October: exactly nine calendar months, with 22 league matches without one in between. Not 'a few difficult weeks'. Nine months. The back line has been running a generous welcome programme for opposition forwards and has finally misplaced the guest book.



02 / THE MATCHWINNER

NETO DID THE LAUNDRY.

Neto broke through 43 seconds after the restart, finishing after Jorrel Hato's work down the left. Everton had an entire interval to prepare and still emerged looking surprised that the second half contained football.

He struck again in the 90th minute to secure his first Premier League brace. Two finishes, three points, no need for a motivational slideshow. Neto deserves the flowers; the defenders can have the washing instructions.

03 / THE OPPOSITION

UNBEATEN. UNTIL THE RINSE.

Everton's unbeaten league start ended here. They had opportunities before the break, but Chelsea survived them and took control after it. Moises Caicedo also struck the woodwork with a volley in the goalless first half.

There is losing, and there is helping Chelsea rediscover a clean sheet that had been missing since January. Everton supplied the recovery service and paid in points. The home side arrived protecting an unbeaten record; they left as the answer to an extremely awkward Chelsea quiz question.

04 / THE DEFENCE

ZERO IS A TEAM EFFORT.

The clean sheet deserves credit beyond the punchline. Chelsea protected their lead and kept the result intact through an enforced goalkeeper change. A defence cannot spend nine months giving opponents opportunities and then expect one shutout to qualify as a dynasty. But it can start somewhere.

Today, it started with doing the basic job properly. No consolation goal to spoil the photograph. No late invitation to make this unnecessarily interesting.

05 / THE KEEPERS

A SERIOUS NOTE.

Emiliano Martinez went off injured and Mike Penders came on for his Premier League debut. The result should not obscure concern for Martinez; we wish him well and will leave medical conclusions to confirmed updates.

Penders helped see the shutout through. Neto supplies the headline, but composure during an unexpected change matters too. That part deserves applause without a punchline.

NEXT UP / PLEASE KEEP THE RECEIPT.

Chelsea fans: frame the zero if you must, but leave room for a second one. Everton: when the opposition turns basic defending into a commemorative event, please stop volunteering as the venue.

Jade Cole's verdict: Neto earned the spotlight. Chelsea earned their clean sheet. Everton earned an uncomfortable role in the anniversary celebrations.