Arsenal 1-1 Paris Saint-Germain (AET) — PSG win 4-3 on penalties

Mikel Arteta admitted he was feeling nothing but “pure pain” after watching his Arsenal side suffer a heart-wrenching penalty shootout defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final in Budapest.

Following a grueling 1-1 draw after extra time, the French giants retained their European crown, clinching a second consecutive title with a 4-3 victory from the spot.

Despite leading Arsenal to a historic Premier League triumph this season, Arteta was disarmingly candid about the gulf that still exists between his developing side and the established elite of continental football.

“I want to congratulate PSG, and Luis Enrique in particular, because in my opinion they are the best team in the world,” Arteta told reporters. “What they are able to do with the ball, through collective possession and individual actions, is something I haven’t seen before.

“It was never our plan to defend in deep blocks, but they force you into those scenarios. Because of that, I have even more praise for how my players fought.”

The tactical story of the final was one of total Parisian dominance resisted by a resilient North London wall. Arsenal saw less than 25 per cent of the ball, spending long periods deep in their own half weathering relentless waves of PSG pressure.

The Gunners had dreamed of a fairytale night when Kai Havertz struck an early opener after just seven minutes. But the Ligue 1 champions eventually broke through just after the hour mark. Ousmane Dembélé converted a clinical second-half penalty, a goal that saw PSG equal the all-time record of 45 goals scored in a single Champions League campaign.

The match was not without controversy. Arteta cut a frustrated figure on the touchline when Arsenal winger Noni Madueke was denied a penalty with the score locked at 1-1.

Yet, the Basque manager refused to hide behind refereeing decisions, acknowledging that his side must continue to evolve if they are to conquer Europe.

For Arsenal, this was only their second appearance in European club football’s

showpiece event, coming exactly 20 years after their heartbreaking 2006 defeat to Barcelona in Paris.

In his nearly seven years at the helm, Arteta has engineered a monumental rebuild, restoring Arsenal to the summit of the English game and ending the club’s painful 22-year wait for a league title. However, he insisted that standing still in modern football is equivalent to moving backward.

“The same progression we have shown over the last few years, we are going to have to do all over again,” Arteta explained. “The standard is increasing every single season.

“You have to go through tonight’s pain, digest it, and turn it into the fuel required to reach a different level. The sheer quality across Europe demands nothing less.”