



Four-Week Review — Phase 2: Early-Season Identity (Weeks 6–11)

A structured checkpoint, completed by the coach using the evidence gathered across Weeks 6–11, before Phase 3 begins in Week 12.

This review follows the same rhythm every four-to-six-week block uses for the rest of the season (next due after Week 17, then Weeks 23, 29, and the season close after Week 36). Filling it in properly — honestly, with specific examples rather than general impressions — is what makes Phase 3's coaching decisions evidence-based rather than guesswork.

1. Principles Covered

WEEK	PRIMARY PRINCIPLE	SECONDARY PRINCIPLE
6	Progression: through, around or over	Width & depth
7	Progression: through (central)	Compactness
8	Collective pressing triggers	Defend the space in behind
9	Switching the point of attack	Support & passing angles
10	Overloads & rest defence	Recognise the picture before playing
11	All Phase 2 principles, consolidated	Progression: through, around or over

By the end of Phase 2, the squad has now been introduced to nine of the season's fourteen formation-neutral principles (Season Architecture, Section 2) — the five from Phase 1 plus this phase's five — and has added three further set-piece routines (a wide free kick, defensive set-piece structure, and two throw-in patterns) to Phase 1's attacking and defensive corners, giving the club a genuine four-routine set-piece programme.

2. Evidence of Progress

(Complete using direct observation from Weeks 6–11, particularly Week 11's "Phase 2 Final" conditioned match, which was deliberately designed as a diagnostic practice run across two different self-organised structures.)

- What specific moment, from any of Weeks 6–10, best demonstrated the team playing as this club intends to play under pressure it hadn't faced in Phase 1? Name the week, the practice, and what happened.
- Compare Week 6's first build-up-against-a-press practice to Week 11's "Two Shapes, One Team" positional practice — is the same underlying skill (progressing under pressure) visibly stronger, and does it hold up in both a back-four and a back-three structure?
- Compare Week 8's isolated trigger-recognition work to Week 11's conditioned match — are presses now genuinely collective and triggered, or still occasionally individual?
- Did the two self-organised structures in Week 11's Tuesday practices produce a noticeably different standard of play, or did the team's identity hold steady across both? Note which, specifically.

3. Recurring Technical Problems

(List any technical issue — passing weight, first touch, delivery technique, throwing technique, finishing — that appeared in more than one week's coach review, e.g. the "Common Problems and Corrections" tables in Weeks 6–11. A problem seen once is noise; a problem seen three or more times across six weeks is signal.)

4. Recurring Tactical Problems

(Same approach — cross-reference the "Common Problems and Corrections" tables and the weekly Coach Review sections. Common candidates to check specifically, given what Phase 2 targeted: the team continuing to work a congested side rather than switching, presses still occasionally individual rather than collective, the rest-defence minimum being breached under match pressure, and either self-organised structure from Week 11 consistently lagging the other.)

5. Physical Observations

The in-season wave described in the Season Architecture (Section 7) — higher relative load on Tuesday, lower on Thursday, modulated by fixture outcomes and individual match minutes — was maintained across Weeks 6–11, with Week 11 carrying the phase's peak physical demand in its Tuesday session. Record:

- Did the squad tolerate the sustained in-season wave without signs of excessive fatigue (flat running, technical breakdown late in sessions, dips in communication)?
- Were the attendance-based physical adjustments (players with 75+ match minutes vs. fragments vs. unused vs. returning from injury) applied consistently across six weeks of competitive fixtures, and did they seem to matter?
- Any individual players who need a different physical entry point into Phase 3 — either because they've missed significant training, or because they're carrying more load than the group?

(This section is observational, not diagnostic. Any player showing signs of possible injury, overtraining, or a health concern should be referred to qualified medical or sports-science support rather than managed through this review.)

6. Communication Development

The full fourteen-call language from the Season Architecture has now been introduced and used across both phases: *Time, Turn, Hold, Drop, Squeeze, Screen, Lock, Travel, Switch, Step, Cover, Delay, Inside/Outside*, plus each set-piece routine's own specific organisation calls.

- Which calls are used accurately and without prompting, including the newer ones

introduced in Phase 2 (*Screen, Lock*, and the set-piece-specific calls)?

- Which calls are still infrequent or inaccurate?
- Is the language being used *early* (before an action, shaping it) or only

afterward (describing what already happened)? Early use is the actual goal, and should be more consistent now than it was at the Phase 1 review.

7. Leadership Development

Phase 2 continued building deliberate opportunities for player ownership: the goalkeeper's expanded organisational role in Week 8's pressing work and Week 9's switching outlet, the thrower's decision-making role in Week 10's set pieces, and the largely coach-silent "Two Shapes, One Team" practice in Week 11.

- Who has stepped into an organisational role without being asked, and is this the same player(s) identified at the Phase 1 review or has leadership begun to distribute further?
- Did a different leader emerge for the back-three structure than the back-four structure in Week 11's split-group practice? If so, that is worth naming specifically — it may indicate role-specific rather than purely personal leadership qualities.
- What is the specific, concrete opportunity to hand more ownership to players in Phase 3, which introduces unit relationships and will depend heavily on units organising themselves (Season Architecture, Section 6)?

8. Set-Piece Progress

Phase 2 delivered the pathway's second milestone (Season Architecture, Section 8): defensive set-piece structure formalised (Week 8's "The Wall"), one wide free-kick routine (Week 9's "The Wide Routine"), and throw-in patterns for the defensive and midfield thirds (Week 10). Combined with Phase 1's attacking and defensive corners, the club now has four established, rehearsed routines.

- Were the wide free-kick routine and defensive corner both executed correctly under fully live opposition in Week 11's "Two Under Pressure" practice?
- Did the defensive free-kick wall structure from Week 8 hold up, including the non-negotiable rest-defence / transition-protection standard?
- Which of the four routines, if any, showed drift when reviewed in Week 11's "The Full Circuit," and does that change the priority for Phase 3's second-phase set-piece development (due Weeks 16–17)?
- Note anything to refine before Phase 3 adds the next layer (second-phase organisation after a corner, a direct free-kick option, attacking throw-ins).

9. Match Transfer

(This is the most important section — everything above is only useful if it's changing what happens on a Saturday.)

- Across the fixtures played during Phase 2, what evidence exists that training content is showing up in matches specifically (not just "the team played well," but a named principle — a genuinely triggered collective press, an early switch of play, a protected overload — visible in a named moment)?
- Did the Match Review and Weekly Adjustment routes (A/B/C) get used accurately each week — is the record of which route applied, and why, still available for reference?
- Specifically for this phase's named match-day connections (cleaner exits under pressure, fewer turnovers in the build-up third, presses starting on a shared signal, fewer sustained spells trapped on one side, fewer clean counters conceded from our own attacks) — which of the five is most visibly true on a Saturday, and which is least?

10. Priorities for the Next Block (Phase 3, Weeks 12–17)

Based on the above, name (in order) the two or three things Phase 3 most needs to address before its own review at Week 17. Phase 3's planned content (unit relationships, creating overloads centrally and wide, final-third combinations, defensive shifting, and pressing different opposition shapes) assumes Phase 1 and 2's foundations are reasonably secure — if they are not, say so here rather than letting Phase 3 proceed on an assumption that hasn't been tested.

Adjusting the Route Into Phase 3

Use whichever of the five scenarios below actually describes the squad — more than one may apply in different areas (e.g., results could be good while a specific principle is still shaky).

IF THE TEAM IS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Increase complexity rather than simply repeating Phase 2 content into Phase 3. This might mean introducing Phase 3's practices at their fuller progressions from the start (live opposition immediately rather than passive-to-live progressions), combining two principles inside a single practice earlier than Week 12's schedule assumes, or bringing forward a light version of Phase 4 content (structural adaptability) as an extension inside an already-strong week. Do not mistake "ahead of schedule" for "finished" — continue revisiting Phase 1 and 2 principles inside Phase 3's practices, as the Season Architecture requires throughout.

IF THE TEAM IS BEHIND SCHEDULE

Identify specifically which Phase 2 principle is weakest (Section 4 above) and give it additional, targeted time inside Phase 3's Tuesday sessions — most Phase 3 practices can absorb an extra five minutes of the relevant Phase 2 idea without abandoning their own week's content, since Phase 3 is explicitly built on Phase 1 and 2's foundations. Do not delay Phase 3's start; instead, simplify Phase 3's own practices (using the regressions already written into each one) until the gap closes.

IF ATTENDANCE HAS BEEN INCONSISTENT

Consolidate rather than expand. Phase 3 introduces genuinely new tactical content (unit relationships, playing between the lines) that depends on a shared understanding among whoever is present. Where attendance has been patchy, spend Week 12's Tuesday session explicitly re-establishing Phase 2's core language and principles with whichever group shows up, rather than assuming continuity that may not exist. The contingency sections built into every practice (low/high attendance, restricted space) exist precisely for this situation.

IF RESULTS ARE POOR BUT PERFORMANCES ARE IMPROVING

This is a normal, expected pattern in early competitive fixtures, and should not trigger panic changes to the season plan. Maintain the players' confidence explicitly — name the specific improvements visible in matches (Section 9), even where results haven't followed yet, and continue the development process as planned. Results tend to follow performance with a lag, not a lead; changing the plan reactively before that lag has played out usually costs more than it gains.

IF RESULTS ARE GOOD BUT PERFORMANCES ARE WEAK

This is the more dangerous pattern, because it invites complacency. Do not let good results substitute for the honest evidence gathered in Sections 2–8 above. If Week 11's "Phase 2 Final" showed genuine gaps despite good results, address those gaps directly in Phase 3 exactly as planned — the review process exists specifically to catch this pattern before it becomes comfortable.

Written by Alan Cunningham with Claude AI · Castlewellan Town FC — Senior Coaching Curriculum · Phase 2 Review, covering Weeks 6–11. An independent club resource, not an official UEFA or Irish FA publication and not endorsed by either.