



Four-Week Review — Phase 3: Developing Collective Understanding (Weeks 12–17)

A structured checkpoint, completed by the coach using the evidence gathered across Weeks 12–17, before Phase 4 begins in Week 18.

This review follows the same rhythm every four-to-six-week block uses for the rest of the season (next due after Week 23, then Weeks 29, and the season close after Week 36). Filling it in properly — honestly, with specific examples rather than general impressions — is what makes Phase 4's coaching decisions evidence-based rather than guesswork.

1. Principles Covered

WEEK	PRIMARY PRINCIPLE	SECONDARY PRINCIPLE
12	Player between the lines	Support & passing angles
13	Overloads & rest defence	Width & depth
14	Progression: through, around or over	Overloads & rest defence
15	Compactness	Pressure, cover, balance
16	Collective pressing triggers	Defend the space in behind
17	All Phase 3 principles, consolidated	Player between the lines

By the end of Phase 3, the squad has now been introduced to all fourteen formation- neutral principles from the Season Architecture (Section 2) at least once — the final principle, playing between the lines as a specifically named role, was formally introduced in Week 12, though every principle continues to be revisited and deepened rather than retired, exactly as the Season Architecture requires. Phase 3 also added a second-phase plan to the defensive corner (Week 16), completing the club's full, six-routine set-piece programme.

2. Evidence of Progress

(Complete using direct observation from Weeks 12–17, particularly Week 17's "Phase 3 Final" conditioned match, which was deliberately designed as a diagnostic practice.)

- What specific moment, from any of Weeks 12–16, best demonstrated the team playing as this club intends to play under pressure it hadn't faced in Phases 1 or 2? Name the week, the practice, and what happened.
- Compare Week 12's isolated connected-lines work to Week 17's largely coach-silent "The Whole Picture" practice — is the back line and midfield line's relationship visibly more stable under live conditions?
- Compare Week 15's isolated block-shifting technical practice to Week 17's conditioned match — does the block now shift as one connected unit without needing the coach to call it?
- Did the team recognise and adapt to a genuinely different opponent build-up shape (back four versus back three) inside the same match at any point during Phase 3's fixtures, echoing Week 16's specific teaching?

3. Recurring Technical Problems

(List any technical issue — passing weight, first touch, delivery technique, finishing — that appeared in more than one week's coach review, e.g. the "Common Problems and Corrections" tables in Weeks 12–17. 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 3 targeted: the back line and midfield line disconnecting under pressure, overloads created without protecting rest defence, combinations forced against a defence that hasn't genuinely opened up, a block shifting too slowly or too far after a switch, and the press being slow to recognise a change in the opponent's build-up shape.)

5. Physical Observations

The in-season wave described in the Season Architecture (Section 7) was maintained across Weeks 12–17, with Week 17 carrying the phase's peak physical demand in its Tuesday session, similar in weight to Weeks 5 and 11. 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 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 4 — 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 in use for the whole of Phase 3, alongside newer, more specific vocabulary introduced this phase (the overlap/underlap calls from Week 13, the depth calls from Week 14, and the counting language from Week 16).

- Which calls are used accurately and without prompting, including the newer, phase-specific ones?
- 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 2 review.

7. Leadership Development

Phase 3 continued building deliberate opportunities for player ownership: the back-line organiser calling the block's shift in Week 15, the pressing team's recognition-and-call responsibility in Week 16, and the largely coach-silent "The Whole Picture" practice in Week 17.

- Who has stepped into an organisational role without being asked, and is this the same player(s) identified at the Phase 1 and Phase 2 reviews, or has leadership continued to distribute further?
- Did a different leader emerge for defensive shifting (Week 15) than for pressing recognition (Week 16)? If so, that's 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 4, which introduces structural adaptability and will depend heavily on players recognising for themselves when a change of shape is needed (Season Architecture, Section 6)?

8. Set-Piece Progress

Phase 3 delivered the pathway's third milestone (Season Architecture, Section 8): second-phase organisation after a corner (rebounds, second balls), completing the club's full six-routine set-piece programme when combined with Phases 1 and 2's four routines (attacking corner, defensive corner, wide free kick, throw-in patterns) and the defensive free-kick wall from Week 8.

- Was the second-phase plan needed and correctly executed at any point during Phase 3's fixtures?
- Did the defensive corner's original zonal-plus-post structure (Week 5) hold up alongside the new second-phase layer, or did adding the new layer disrupt the original structure?
- Which of the six routines, if any, showed drift when reviewed in Week 17's "The Set-Piece Gallery," and does that change the priority for Phase 4's set-piece expansion (due Week 23, a second attacking corner option and refined marking assignments)?
- Note anything to refine before Phase 4 adds the next layer.

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 3, what evidence exists that training content is showing up in matches specifically (not just "the team played well," but a named principle — a genuine central overload, a staggered box arrival, a collective block shift, a correctly adapted press — 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 (central receivers turning under less pressure, numbers-up situations converted more often, more players arriving late into the box, the block shifting as one unit, the press adapting to opponent shape inside a half) — which of the five is most visibly true on a Saturday, and which is least?

10. Priorities for the Next Block (Phase 4, Weeks 18–23)

Based on the above, name (in order) the two or three things Phase 4 most needs to address before its own review at Week 23. Phase 4's planned content (changing shape in and out of possession, alternative build-up structures, one striker versus two, and choosing between a high press and a low block) assumes Phases 1, 2 and 3's foundations are reasonably secure — if they are not, say so here rather than letting Phase 4 proceed on an assumption that hasn't been tested.

Adjusting the Route Into Phase 4

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 3 content into Phase 4. This might mean introducing Phase 4'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 18's schedule assumes, or bringing forward a light version of Phase 5 content (match management) as an extension inside an already-strong week. Do not mistake "ahead of schedule" for "finished" — continue revisiting Phases 1, 2 and 3 principles inside Phase 4's practices, as the Season Architecture requires throughout.

IF THE TEAM IS BEHIND SCHEDULE

Identify specifically which Phase 3 principle is weakest (Section 4 above) and give it additional, targeted time inside Phase 4's Tuesday sessions — most Phase 4 practices can absorb an extra five minutes of the relevant Phase 3 idea without abandoning their own week's content, since Phase 4 is explicitly built on Phases 1, 2 and 3's foundations. Do not delay Phase 4's start; instead, simplify Phase 4'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 4 introduces genuinely new tactical content (structural adaptability, changing shape mid-match) that depends on a shared understanding among whoever is present. Where attendance has been patchy, spend Week 18's Tuesday session explicitly re-establishing Phase 3'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, 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 17's "Phase 3 Final" showed genuine gaps despite good results, address those gaps directly in Phase 4 exactly as planned — the review process exists specifically to catch this pattern before it becomes comfortable.

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