



Four-Week Review — Phase 4: Tactical Adaptability (Weeks 18–23)

A structured checkpoint, completed by the coach using the evidence gathered across Weeks 18–23, before Phase 5 begins in Week 24.

This review follows the same rhythm every four-to-six-week block uses for the rest of the season (next due after Week 29, then the season close after Week 36). Filling it in properly — honestly, with specific examples rather than general impressions — is what makes Phase 5's coaching decisions evidence-based rather than guesswork.

1. Principles Covered

WEEK	PRIMARY PRINCIPLE	SECONDARY PRINCIPLE
18	Structural adaptability (possession)	Compactness
19	Progression: through, around, over	Rest defence
20	Width & depth	Overloads & rest defence
21	Collective pressing triggers	Protect the centre, then the box
22	Progression: through, around, over	Switching the point of attack
23	All Phase 4 principles, consolidated	Collective pressing triggers

By the end of Phase 4, the squad has now trained the ability to change shape both in and out of possession, build from three distinct starting shapes (2-3, 3-2, 3-1), play with either one striker or two and understand the attacking and defensive demands of each, choose deliberately between a high press and a mid-block, organise a genuine low block, and solve both a high press and a low block with the correct in-possession solution. Phase 4 also expanded the club's set-piece programme with a genuine second attacking corner option (Week 23), giving the team two indistinguishable routines from the same starting picture for the first time.

2. Evidence of Progress

(Complete using direct observation from Weeks 18–22, particularly Week 23's "Adapt or Break" and "Phase 4 Final" practices, which were deliberately designed as diagnostic, minimal-instruction practices.)

- What specific moment, from any of Weeks 18–22, best demonstrated the team changing its own shape or approach without being told, in a way it couldn't have managed before Phase 4? Name the week, the practice, and what happened.
- In Week 23's "Adapt or Break," did the team produce at least one genuinely spontaneous structural adjustment with no coach cue? What was it, and who organised it?
- Compare Week 18's first, coach-led structural change to Week 23's "Phase 4 Final" — is the team's overall comfort with changing shape visibly greater now than it was at the start of the phase?
- Did the team correctly read and respond to a genuinely different opponent picture (a high press versus a low block, or an opponent that changed its own approach mid-match) inside any of Phase 4's fixtures?

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 18–23. 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 4 targeted: the team defaulting to a single, familiar build-up or front-player shape regardless of the picture, slow recognition of a change in the opponent's press or block, switches of play that are too slow or poorly weighted to beat a press, and low-block-breaking combinations forced into covered central lanes rather than patient recycling.)

5. Physical Observations

The in-season wave described in the Season Architecture (Section 7) shifted during Phase 4 — Week 21's high-intensity press-bout theme carried the phase's peak physical demand, while Week 23 (a review week) returns to moderate load ahead of Phase 5's more situation-specific physical profile. Record:

- Did the squad tolerate Week 21's high-intensity pressing work without signs of excessive fatigue carrying into the following days?
- 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 5 — 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 season's language has now been in use for the whole of Phase 4, alongside newer, more specific vocabulary introduced this phase (the scenario-recognition language from Week 21, and the switch-of-play calls from Week 22).

- 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 3 review.
- Did players organise a structural change out loud, entirely on their own, at any point during Week 23's minimal-instruction practices?

7. Leadership Development

Phase 4 continued building deliberate opportunities for player ownership: the whole team's shape-change decisions in Weeks 18–19 without a coach's structural instruction, the scenario-recognition responsibility in Week 21, and the almost entirely coach-silent "Adapt or Break" practice in Week 23.

- Who has stepped into an organisational role without being asked, and is this the same player(s) identified at the Phase 1, 2 and 3 reviews, or has leadership continued to distribute further?
- Did a different leader emerge for organising a structural change (Weeks 18–19) than for organising the press or block choice (Week 21)? If so, that's worth naming specifically.
- What is the specific, concrete opportunity to hand more ownership to players in

Phase 5, which introduces match-state management and will depend heavily on players reading a game situation — protecting a lead, chasing a game, playing with or against ten — and making in-game decisions largely for themselves (Season Architecture, Section 6)?

8. Set-Piece Progress

Phase 4 delivered the pathway's fourth milestone (Season Architecture, Section 8): a second attacking corner option (the near-post twist introduced in Week 23) and refined defensive marking assignments, building on Phases 1–3's four routines and second-phase plan.

- Was the second attacking corner option needed and correctly executed at any point during Phase 4's fixtures?
- Did the refined near-post marking assignment from Week 23 hold up against a genuine opponent, or does it need further work before Phase 5?
- Which of the seven routines now in the programme, if any, showed drift when reviewed this phase, and does that change the priority for Phase 5's set-piece work (due Week 27, controlling restarts, and Week 29, a full review with pressure finishing)?
- Note anything to refine before Phase 5 adds its own 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 4, what evidence exists that training content is showing up in matches specifically (not just "the team played well," but a named principle — a genuine mid-match shape change, a build-up shape chosen to match the opponent's press, a front-player picture adapted correctly, a block height chosen for the scoreline, a press beaten cleanly, a low block unlocked — 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 (shape change without a stoppage in play, build-up unaffected by which shape is used, front players interchange without confusion, the team defends in more than one block by choice, two distinct in-possession solutions on show) — which is most visibly true on a Saturday, and which is least?

10. Priorities for the Next Block (Phase 5, Weeks 24–29)

Based on the above, name (in order) the two or three things Phase 5 most needs to address before its own review at Week 29. Phase 5's planned content (protecting a lead, chasing a game, playing with and against ten players, managing momentum, controlling restarts, and the closing minutes) assumes Phases 1–4's foundations are reasonably secure — if they are not, say so here rather than letting Phase 5 proceed on an assumption that hasn't been tested.

Adjusting the Route Into Phase 5

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 4 content into Phase 5. This might mean introducing Phase 5's scripted match-state practices at their fuller progressions from the start (live, unpredictable scenarios rather than clearly signposted ones), combining two match-state principles inside a single practice earlier than Week 24's schedule assumes, or bringing forward a light version of Phase 6 content (opposition-specific preparation) as an extension inside an already-strong week. Do not mistake "ahead of schedule" for "finished" — continue revisiting Phases 1–4 principles inside Phase 5's practices, as the Season Architecture requires throughout.

IF THE TEAM IS BEHIND SCHEDULE

Identify specifically which Phase 4 principle is weakest (Section 4 above) and give it additional, targeted time inside Phase 5's Tuesday sessions — most Phase 5 practices can absorb an extra five minutes of the relevant Phase 4 idea without abandoning their own week's content, since Phase 5's match-state scenarios depend on the team already being able to change shape and approach on demand. Do not delay Phase 5's start; instead, simplify Phase 5'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 5 introduces genuinely new tactical content (match-state management, playing with or against ten players, controlling restarts) that depends on a shared understanding among whoever is present. Where attendance has been patchy, spend Week 24's Tuesday session explicitly re-establishing Phase 4's core shape-change and block-choice language 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 23's "Adapt or Break" and "Phase 4 Final" showed genuine gaps despite good results, address those gaps directly in Phase 5 exactly as planned — the review process exists specifically to catch this pattern before it becomes comfortable.

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