

The Next Opponent

A half-page to fill in after watching them once — or just from last season's memory. Print it, scribble on it, bring it Thursday.

The season plan teaches principles; this page points them at a specific Saturday. Five prompts, deliberately short — a one-pager the whole squad can absorb beats a dossier nobody reads. It pairs with each week's Formation Translation section: once you know their shape, that section already says how this week's principle applies against it.

1. Their shape

Formation on paper: _____ **How they actually build up:** _____

Watch for: back three or back four in build-up? Does the keeper play short or long? Who drops to receive?

2. The one thing they do well

Be specific — “the left winger runs in behind” or “long throws into the box”, not “they’re decent”. This decides the week’s defensive emphasis: space in behind → drop the line and defend it (the programme’s “defend the space in behind” principle); box deliveries → Thursday’s walk-through comes from Defending the Box.

3. The one thing they give away

Where do their goals against come from? A full-back who doesn’t recover → overloads and switches (Weeks 6, 32). A high line → in-behind runs at the collective trigger. Slow to re-form after losing it → counter early, exactly as the transition principle says.

4. Their set pieces — both ways

Their delivery threat: near post / far post / short / long throws (circle) **How they defend corners:** zonal / man / mixed — and the space that leaves: _____

Cross-check the attacking routines already installed this phase against that defence — the set-piece library’s opposition-cue notes tell you which routine punishes which structure.

5. The message

One sentence for the changing room:

One player job that wins us the game:

If the team remembers a single thing at 2:55pm, this is it. Keep it about us — “we switch early when their left side presses” travels better than a lecture about them.

After the match: thirty seconds — was the read right? The week’s Coach Review section asks the same question; this page is its evidence.

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · match preparation one-pager · written by Alan Cunningham with Claude AI