



Week 2 — Pre-Season Foundation

Tags: `pre-season` `possession` `progression` `unit-work` `full-squad-practice` `conditioning`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	2 of 36
Season phase	1 — Pre-Season Foundation
Core principle	Width & depth
Secondary principle	Support & passing angles (revisited from Week 1)
Previous match review focus	None — still pre-season, no fixture yet. Week 3 onward will open with a genuine Match Review and Weekly Adjustment section reviewing the previous Saturday.
Weekly tactical problem	Left alone, players compress toward the ball. Width and depth are what stop that — the team using the full pitch, touchline to touchline and box to box, so the opposition cannot squeeze the game into a small, crowded area. This week asks a slightly harder question than "spread out": it asks players to keep last week's angled-support picture <i>while</i> the pitch is stretched, because a wide, deep team that has forgotten how to support the ball is just as easy to press as a narrow one.
Formation-neutral explanation	Width and depth are not formation labels — a back four with two wingers provides them one way, a back three with wing-backs provides them another, and a front two with a withdrawn playmaker provides depth without needing a front three at all. What matters is that, in any given moment, some player is touching each touchline and some player is threatening the space in behind — not that any particular shirt number is doing it.
Example structural applications	In a 4-3-3: the two wide forwards hold the touchlines high (width), the centre-forward and the underlapping full-backs threaten depth and support respectively. In a 3-5-2: the two wing-backs provide the width a 4-3-3's wide forwards gave, operating from a deeper start position but reaching the same wide zones in possession; the two strikers share the depth job between them, one often dropping to link while the other stays on the last line. The picture — width touching both touchlines, depth threatening in behind — is identical; the players filling it, and how far they travel to get there, is not.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Still pre-season — no fixture yet to review. The three routes described in Week 1 apply from Week 3 onward. This week, Route C is the live one again: pre-season attendance in the second week of August is rarely full-strength, and the practices below are written to hold their teaching value at both ends of the attendance range.

Tuesday — Session 3

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	3 of 72
Week	2
Season phase	1 — Pre-Season Foundation
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Building the aerobic base through possession: width & depth
Short summary	Continues building the aerobic base entirely through the ball while introducing the season's second principle — using the full pitch — without losing the angled-support habit installed in Week 1.
Tags	`pre-season` `possession` `conditioning` `progression`
Primary learning objective	Players occupy width (touching or near the touchline) and depth (threatening the space furthest from the ball) simultaneously, not one at the expense of the other.
Secondary learning objective	Players maintain last week's angled-support picture even as the team's overall shape stretches.
Match connection	Still pre-season — the connection is to the club's identity statement: a team that is "hard to press" needs room to play in, and room does not appear by accident. It is created, deliberately, by players who hold width and threaten depth.
Expected tactical outcome	By the end of the session, the team occupies visibly more of the pitch's total area during possession than it did in Week 1, without possession becoming any less secure.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high, continuing the pre-season aerobic build — this week's games are played on slightly larger areas than Week 1, raising the running demand while the ball stays the primary conditioning tool.
Recommended intensity	7–8 / 10. Second week of pre-season; load rises from Week 1 rather than resetting.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 44 flat markers (mixed colours) · 16 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 4 mini goals · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout. In Practice 4 they play their own-goal role and are coached to use the width of the six-yard box on distribution, a direct application of this week's principle to the goalkeeper's own game.
Pitch dimensions	Largest practice area this week is 60 x 40 m (Practice 4) — noticeably larger than Week 1's equivalent, reflecting the week's subject.
Area layout	One end of the pitch progressively widened station to station, so the group physically feels the practice area grow across the hour.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Reduce Practice 2 to 6v2 in a 22x16 m grid (four zones rather than six); Practice 3 becomes 4v4+1 neutral; Practice 4 becomes 6v6 on a 48x32 m area — smaller, but keep the ratio of pitch size to player numbers roughly constant so the stretching demand survives.

FIELD	DETAIL
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Run two parallel grids for Practice 2; Practice 4 can extend to 9v9, which suits this week's subject well — more players makes holding a genuinely wide, deep shape harder, not easier, and is worth coaching at the larger scale.
Contingency — restricted space	This is the week most affected by a small facility. Where a full width area is not available, keep the zone/channel structure but compress proportionally, and say so explicitly to players: "we're coaching the same picture, at a smaller true size, because that's the pitch we have tonight" — the habit still transfers.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Stretch the Grid</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Six Zones</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Stretch to Score</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Full Width, Full Depth</i>	Black
0:59–1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — STRETCH THE GRID (ARRIVAL)

Duration: 10 minutes · **Training load:** Low

Tactical purpose: Raises heart rate and, without stopping to explain it, has players physically feel the difference between a cramped space and a stretched one — the grid itself grows twice during the warm-up.

Organisation: Starts as a 14 x 10 m grid, one ball per player, standard ball-mastery movements for three minutes; the coach then widens the grid to 20 x 14 m for paired passing, and again to 26 x 18 m for the final three minutes, at which point pairs must find each other across genuinely open space rather than a short, easy distance. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully.

Walkthrough: Individual ball work inside the small grid, then pairs form as the grid is widened for the first time — players immediately notice they must communicate and move further to receive. The grid widens a second time at minute seven; the coach's only verbal instruction across the whole ten minutes is "find the width" as each expansion happens.

Rules: Continuous movement; on each grid expansion, pairs must reposition to use the new space rather than staying in their original spot.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* passing weight increases as distance increases — a lesson players feel physically before it is ever said aloud.
- *Physical:* gradually rising work rate as the grid grows, a gentle bridge into the higher-intensity practices that follow.
- *Psychological:* comfort with open space rather than an instinct to close it down by walking toward a team-mate.

PRACTICE 2 — SIX ZONES (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

Duration: 15 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate

Tactical purpose: Makes width and depth impossible to ignore by dividing the practice area into six zones and capping how many attacking players may occupy each one at once. A team that bunches simply runs out of legal space to stand in — the practice enforces the principle structurally rather than relying on the coach to say "spread out" repeatedly.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 28 x 20 m, divided into six zones (three columns x two rows)
- **Players:** 11 outfield (8 possession + 3 defenders), rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through the possession team
- **Team sizes:** 8 v 3
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 44 flat markers (zone boundaries), 2 footballs
- **Starting positions:** roughly one attacking pair per zone, defenders starting centrally
- **Ball supply:** spare ball with the coach at the grid edge
- **Restart:** nearest zone player restarts any stoppage
- **Coach position:** grid edge, moving to see all six zones
- **Rotation method:** defender forcing an error, or defender in the practice longest, swaps out every two minutes
- **Direction of play:** none — positional possession, no goal

Practice walkthrough: Eight possession players are told, once, that no more than two of them may stand in any one zone at any time — the six zones together cover the width of the practice area (three columns) and its depth (two rows). Three defenders press inside the same space. Players keep the ball while continuously checking whether their zone already has two occupants; if it does, the next free player must move to an under-occupied zone before the ball can be safely played to them. This week's second half of the practice removes the rule and asks players to hold the same spread voluntarily — the true test of whether the shape has become a habit rather than a rule being obeyed.

Rules: Maximum two possession players per zone (enforced for the first eight minutes, then removed). Two-touch maximum. A pass into an already-full zone does not count and restarts with the same team.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* every possession player is responsible for their own zone discipline — there is no player whose job is only to defend width or only to defend depth.
- *Unit:* the group of eight functions as a shape that must remain spread across all six zones simultaneously, echoing the "occupy different vertical and horizontal lines" principle from the Season Architecture.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* on winning the ball, the three defenders are asked to try to hold the same six-zone spread for three passes, an early, incidental rehearsal of "resetting the team's attacking structure" after a regain.

Decision-making triggers:

- My zone already has two players in it → I move to an adjacent, under-occupied zone before calling for the ball.
- The ball is played to the far side of the grid → the nearest depth zone (top or bottom row) should already have a player in it, not one arriving late.
- The zone rule is removed (second half of the practice) → the shape must now be chosen, not enforced; if it collapses, that is the coaching point, not a failure to be corrected quietly.

Communication language used: *Time*, *Squeeze* (used here to mean "the zone in front of you is full — hold your position rather than crowd in").

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Longer-range passing technique — width and depth naturally increase pass distance, and technique must hold up over that distance.
Tactical	Recognising zone occupancy as a proxy for the real match skill: reading where team-mates already are before moving.
Physical	Repeated, longer movements between zones than Week 1's rondo required — a genuine step up in running demand.
Psychological	Discipline to stay in an under-occupied zone even when it feels far from the ball and the action.
Communication & leadership	Calling a team-mate away from an overcrowded zone before the coach has to.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What happened to your team's passing options once every zone was properly occupied compared to when two zones were empty?
2. When the zone rule was removed, did the team keep the same shape — and if not, why not?
3. What is the difference between "spreading out" and what this practice actually asked of you?
4. How would the six zones map onto a real match — which zone is a full-back's, which is a striker's?
5. What told you a team-mate needed you to move rather than to receive the ball yourself?
6. Why might a coach remove a rule halfway through a practice rather than keep it on throughout?

Progressions:

1. Reduce to four zones (two columns x two rows), raising the density and difficulty of maintaining the spread.
2. Add a fourth defender, testing whether the shape holds under greater pressure.
3. Introduce a direction of play and a target zone, converting the positional practice into a progression exercise.

Regressions:

1. Keep the zone rule active for the full 15 minutes rather than removing it halfway.
2. Reduce to two defenders.
3. Allow three players per zone rather than two, easing the spatial demand while the idea beds in.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Players drift back toward a crowded zone out of habit	The pull toward the ball is a strong, old instinct	Repeated overcrowding in the same one or two zones despite the rule	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: physically walk two players to their correct zone, ask the group why it matters	Resume from the reshaped positions
Shape collapses immediately once the zone rule is removed	The spread was obeyed as a rule, not yet understood as useful	Zones 1 and 2 (nearest the ball) overcrowd within seconds of the rule dropping	Let it flow briefly, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what changed the moment I stopped enforcing it?"	Resume with the question answered aloud
Passes attempted beyond a player's technical range as distances grow	Players not yet adjusted to longer-range passing technique	Balls consistently under-hit or overhit between distant zones	Let it flow with a drive-by call	Technical cue on backswing and follow-through for longer passes	Continue

Coach interventions used in this practice: mostly *questioning* and *drive-by coaching*; one deliberate *freeze-and-correct* early to establish the zone habit physically, since a verbal explanation alone is unlikely to be enough in the first attempt at this practice.

Success indicators:

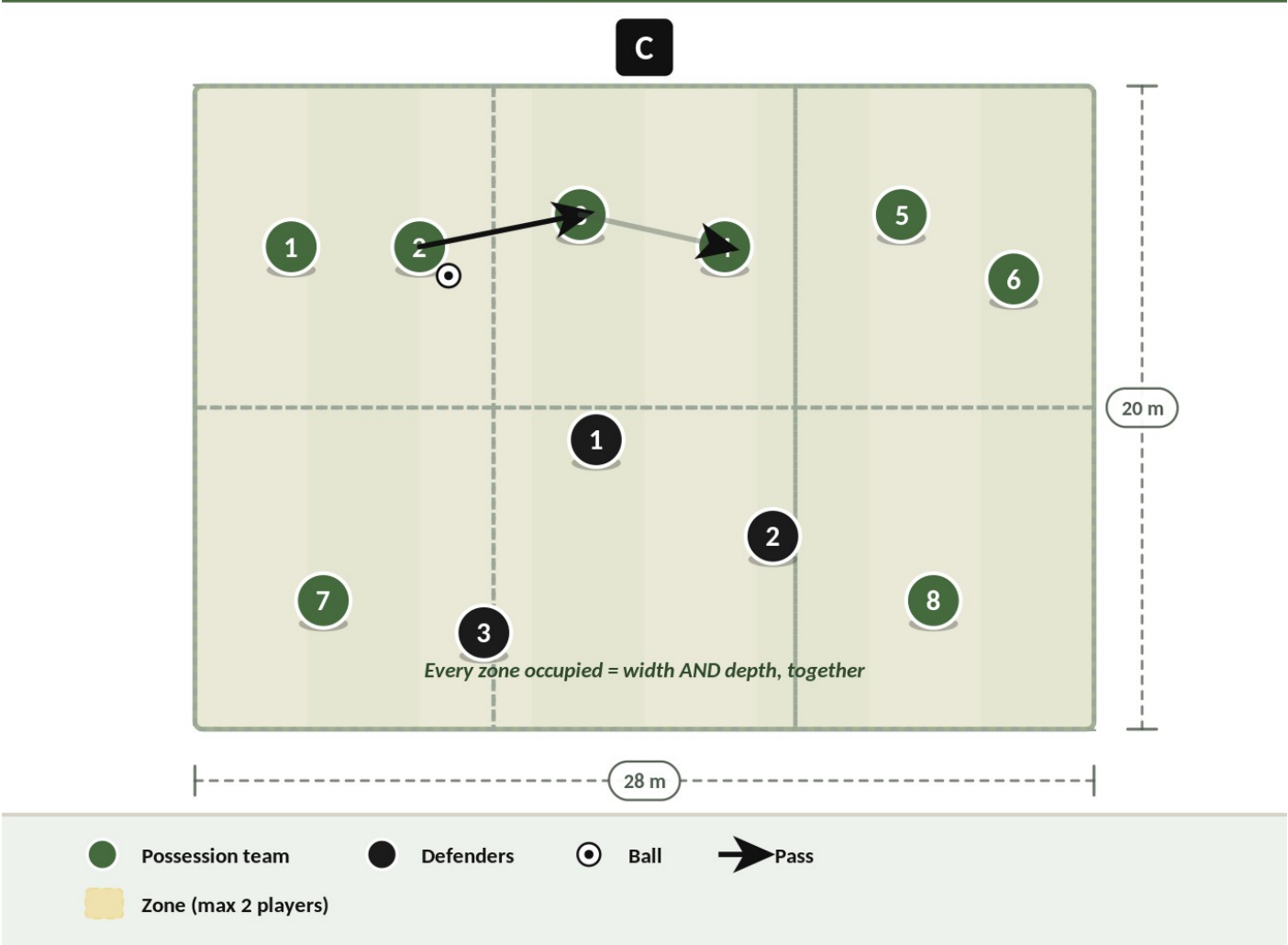
- All six zones show at least one occupant for the majority of the practice.

- The shape survives, even partially, once the zone rule is removed.
- Longer-range passes are completed at a similar success rate to Week 1's shorter rondo passing by the end of the practice.

Coach's eye: watch the practice area as six boxes, not as one grid — a glance that takes in all six at once tells you more than watching the ball. Note which zones empty out first when players are tired; that is usually the zone furthest from the ball, which is exactly the zone this week is designed to protect.

T2.2 SIX ZONES — Width & Depth in Possession

28 x 20 m, six zones • 8 possession vs 3 defenders • max 2 per zone • 15 minutes



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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 28x20 metre grid divided into six equal zones (three columns, two rows) with dashed zone boundaries and light yellow shading, dimension labels on the outer edges. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1-8 spread roughly two per zone. Three players in black bibs numbered 1-3 positioned centrally. A white football near a green player. Solid black arrow showing a completed pass, a second faded grey arrow showing an earlier pass. Small dark coach icon above the grid. Title: 'SIX ZONES — Width & Depth in Possession'. Subtitle: '28 x 20 m, six zones • 8 possession vs 3 defenders • max 2 per zone • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training grid on grass marked into six zones with flat cones, green-bibbed players spread two-per-zone across the width and depth of the area, three black-bibbed defenders pressing

centrally, ball in transit between two distant green-bibbed players, coach at the grid's edge scanning across the whole area rather than focused on the ball.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): *"Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. A grass training area marked into six zones with flat orange cone lines, eight players in dark green bibs spread two per zone across the full width and depth of the grid, three players in black bibs pressing centrally. A football travelling in the air between two green-bibbed players positioned far apart. A coach in green training kit stands at the edge of the grid, head turned scanning the whole area rather than watching the ball directly. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture, amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."*

PRACTICE 3 — STRETCH TO SCORE (SKILL GAME)

Duration: 15 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate-high

Tactical purpose: Adds opposition, goals and a genuine scoring incentive to the same idea, requiring the ball to reach a wide, deep corner zone before a goal counts — making width and depth worth something rather than merely encouraged, in the same way Week 1's scoring condition made angled support worth something.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 24 m
- **Players:** 12 outfield + 2 neutrals (goalkeepers rotate through)
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both goalkeepers play as corner-zone neutrals, always for the team in possession
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 6, plus the 2 neutrals
- **Neutrals:** 2, one in each of two diagonal corner zones, rotating sides every four minutes
- **Equipment:** 2 goals, 4 flat markers per corner zone (16 total), 4 cones (pitch corners)
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram — teams spread across the central area, neutrals fixed in opposite corner zones
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** nearest sideline, non-offending team
- **Coach position:** halfway line, sideline, mobile
- **Rotation method:** goal scored → losing team's furthest-forward player becomes a neutral for 90 seconds
- **Direction of play:** both directions, two goals

Practice walkthrough: Two teams of six play with two neutral corner-zone players who always support whichever team is in possession. A goal only counts if the possession that created it touched one of the shaded corner zones at any point in the move — forcing the team to use the full width and depth of the practice area rather than scoring through the middle, which remains the easiest route if left unchecked.

Rules: Goals only count following a touch in a corner zone earlier in the same possession. Neutrals are two-touch maximum. Standard small-sided restarts. First to 5 qualifying goals, or most goals at 15 minutes.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* every player alternates between the player stretching play toward a corner and the player arriving to finish once the ball has been recycled centrally.
- *Unit:* each team's shape should show players occupying both corners and both a central and advanced line simultaneously — width and depth, together, exactly as Practice 2 introduced.
- *Team:* recognising the moment to go wide and deep versus the moment to combine centrally, since not every attack needs to touch a corner in the most literal, direct way.
- *Transition:* on losing the ball, nearest player delays; team recovers width first, since a team caught narrow and central after a turnover is the easiest picture to counter-attack against.

Decision-making triggers:

- The central area is congested → this is a width situation; look for the corner zone.
- A corner zone is reached but no immediate cross or cutback is on → recycle centrally and reset rather than forcing it.
- Possession is lost with the team stretched wide → nearest players recover centrally first, accepting territory before regaining a compact defensive picture.

Communication language used: *Switch, Time, Travel* (first live use of "Travel" — carrying the ball into open depth or width rather than passing immediately).

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Crossing and cutback technique from the corner zones — the first genuine service-into-the-box technical work of the season.
Tactical	Recognising when width/depth is genuinely on versus when it is forced.
Physical	Repeated wide sprints to and from the corner zones — a real, football-specific repeat-sprint stimulus.
Psychological	Patience to recycle centrally rather than force a low-percentage ball into a crowded corner.
Communication & leadership	Calling team-mates into the corner zone early, before the ball has already been played there.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was different about attacks that used a corner zone compared to ones that tried to score straight through the middle?
2. When did your team choose to recycle centrally rather than force the ball wide — and was that the right choice?
3. How does the neutral in the corner change the picture compared to if that space were simply empty?
4. What is the physical cost of using the full width and depth of the pitch, and how does the team manage that cost across a whole match?
5. If your team lined up with wing-backs instead of full-backs, who would be reaching the corner zones instead?
6. What happened defensively in the moments just after your team lost the ball while stretched wide?

Progressions:

1. Require both corner zones to be used in the same possession before a goal counts, raising the patience and range demanded.
2. Remove the neutrals, forcing outfield players to create the width themselves.
3. Add a time limit — a corner zone touch must lead to a shot within six seconds, adding tempo.

Regressions:

1. Widen the corner zones to make them easier to reach and use.
2. Allow any wide touch (not just inside the marked zone) to satisfy the scoring condition while the idea beds in.
3. Reduce to 4v4 + 2 neutrals for more individual involvement.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Ball forced into a corner zone under no real pressure to do so, losing possession cheaply	Players treat the rule as an obligation rather than a genuine option	Rushed, misplaced passes toward a corner from a promising central position	Let it flow with a drive-by call	"Only go wide if it's really on — you can recycle first"	Continue
Corner zone reached but nobody arrives to receive the cross or cutback	Depth movement not yet linked to the wide play	Crosses/cutbacks played into empty space	Stop	Short group intervention: coach the timing of the arriving run	Resume from the same picture
Central area becomes completely abandoned	Overcorrection — team over-emphasises width at the expense of any central presence	No player available for the recycling pass back inside	Let it flow, then natural stoppage	Question: "who was your out-ball when the corner didn't work?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: primarily *drive-by coaching* with one planned *short group intervention* on arriving runs, since timing a run into the box is a technical/tactical skill few players will already have automatically.

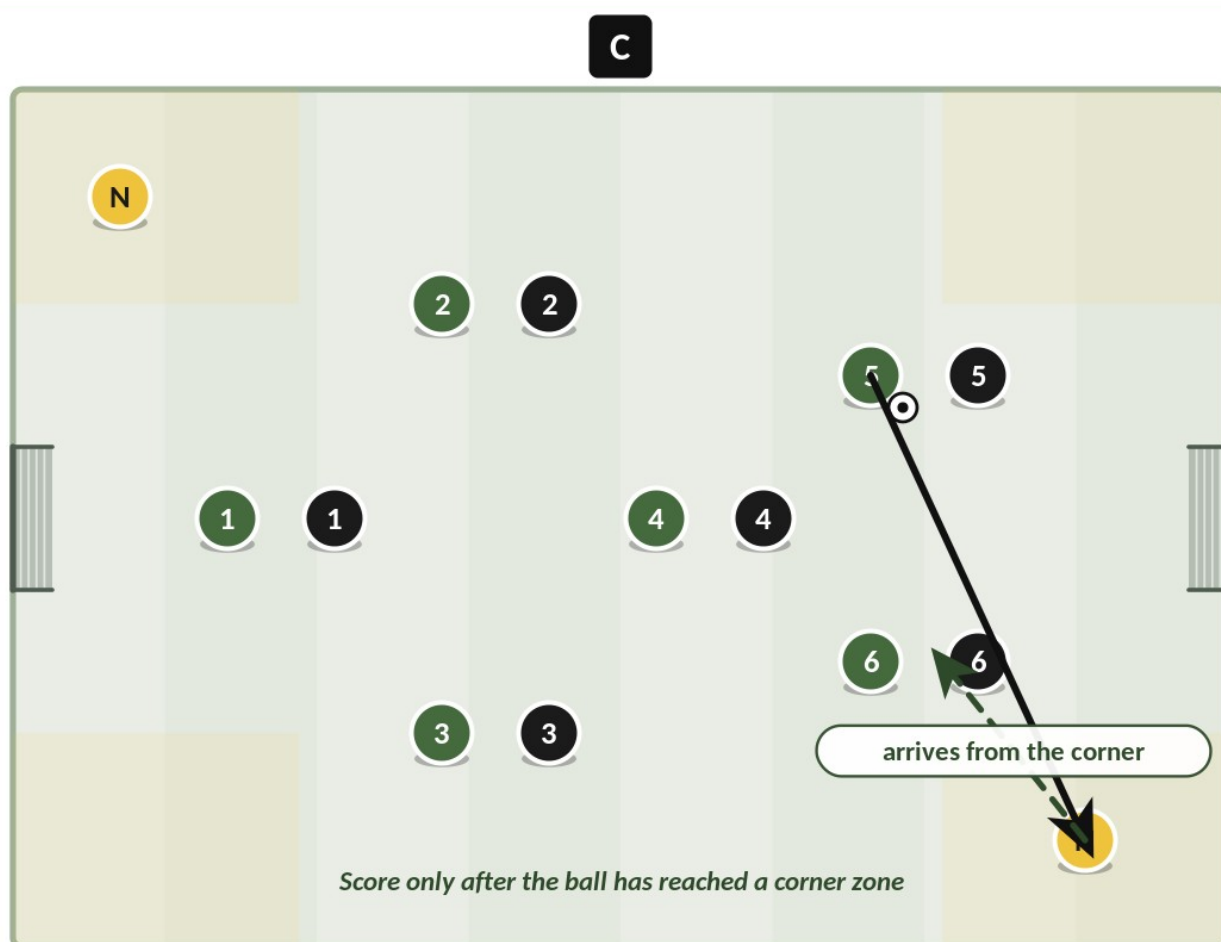
Success indicators:

- The majority of qualifying goals involve genuine, unforced use of a corner zone.
- At least one player is regularly arriving with correct timing to finish crosses or cutbacks.
- Recycling centrally (rather than forcing width) is visible at least several times across the practice.

Coach's eye: watch the timing of the run into the box relative to the ball reaching the corner zone — arriving too early is as unproductive as arriving too late. Watch also whether the team's central presence collapses entirely when the ball goes wide.

T2.3 STRETCH TO SCORE — Small-Sided Game

34 x 24 m • 6v6 + 2 wide-corner neutrals • two goals • 15 minutes



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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x24 metre pitch with a small goal at each end and four shaded yellow corner zones near each goal. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6 and two players in yellow bibs labelled N in opposite corner zones. Six players in black bibs numbered 1–6. White football near a green player. Black solid arrow showing a pass toward a corner zone, green dashed arrow labelled 'arrives from the corner' showing a run into the box. Title: 'STRETCH TO SCORE —

Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 24 m · 6v6 + 2 wide-corner neutrals · two goals · 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated sideline view of a small-sided game with a wide corner zone marked in one section of the pitch, a green-bibbed neutral player receiving in the corner, a cutback pass travelling toward a green-bibbed attacker arriving into the box, black-bibbed defenders recovering across, coach watching from the touchline near halfway.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): *"Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur small-sided football game on a grass pitch with a marked wide corner zone near one goal. A player in a yellow bib receiving the ball inside the corner zone, about to play a cutback pass across the box toward a player in a dark green bib arriving with a well-timed run. Players in black bibs recovering across to defend. A mini goal visible nearby. A coach in training kit on the touchline near halfway, watching closely. Late-afternoon light, realistic grass pitch and shadows, amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."*

PRACTICE 4 — FULL WIDTH, FULL DEPTH (CONDITIONED MATCH)

Duration: 15 minutes · **Training load:** High

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's idea at full match scale — the largest area used so far this season — and links width and depth explicitly to Week 1's principle by rewarding a move that uses both a wide channel and a depth zone before scoring, tying the two weeks together rather than presenting them as separate ideas.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 60 x 40 m
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role, encouraged to use the full width of their distribution
- **Team sizes:** 8 v 8
- **Neutrals:** none — width and depth channels are marked zones, not extra players, so the team must create the picture itself
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 12 flat markers marking the four channel/zone boundaries, corner cones
- **Starting positions:** standard match shape, split evenly by the coach's judgement
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** match-realistic restarts
- **Coach position:** touchline, halfway line, mobile
- **Rotation method:** none required; goalkeepers may split time at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** standard, both teams attack opposite goals

Practice walkthrough: Two teams of eight play a conditioned match across a genuinely large area with both wide touchline channels and both end-of-pitch depth zones marked. A goal is worth double if the move that created it touched both a wide channel and a depth zone at any point — deliberately combining this week's two markers of "full width, full depth" into a single, demanding condition that only a team playing with real patience and real range achieves consistently.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules; double-goal bonus as described. Most goals in 15 minutes wins.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* wide players are asked explicitly to hold width rather than drift inside "to get involved" — a direct, live correction of the most common habit that erodes team shape at this level.
- *Unit:* the front line and back line together must maintain depth between them without becoming disconnected — an early, gentle preview of the compactness principle Week 3 names properly.
- *Team:* patience to build possession across a large area rather than rushing every attack, and recognising when the double-bonus picture is genuinely on.
- *Transition:* on losing the ball in a stretched shape, the team must recover its central compactness quickly — the cost of playing wide and deep is a longer recovery run, and players need to feel that cost honestly in this practice.

Decision-making triggers:

- A wide channel is unused for several passes → check whether it should be, or whether the picture genuinely calls for a central route this time.
- The team has been camped centrally for a sustained spell → this is very likely a signal to widen and lengthen the picture rather than continue forcing the same central route.
- Possession is lost while the team is fully stretched → immediate, urgent recovery is required — this is the moment the team is most vulnerable all session.

Communication language used: *Switch, Travel, Squeeze, Time* — the fullest combination of the season's language so far, used together under full match conditions.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Sustaining passing accuracy over the longer distances a genuinely wide, deep shape requires, especially as fatigue builds late in the practice.
Tactical	Balancing width/depth with the cost of recovering compactness after a turnover — the first explicit link between an attacking principle and its defensive consequence.
Physical	The week's peak physical demand, appropriately placed last, on the week's largest playing area.
Psychological	Patience — resisting the urge to force quick, direct football on a big pitch when the picture calls for building through it instead.
Communication & leadership	Organising the team's width and depth verbally in real time, without the zone markers doing the coaching for them (unlike Practice 2's enforced zones).

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did a double-bonus goal require that a normal goal didn't — and how hard was that to produce consistently?
2. How did it feel, physically, to recover from a fully stretched shape after losing the ball — and what does that tell you about balancing this week's principle with next week's (compactness)?
3. Which players held width most consistently, and which drifted inside — and what effect did that have on the team's shape?
4. If your team were playing a back three tonight instead of a back four, how would the "full width, full depth" picture change?
5. What is the relationship between this week's principle and last week's — can you have good angled support without width and depth, or good width and depth without angled support?
6. Looking at the whole practice, what was the team's biggest single improvement from the first five minutes to the last five?

Progressions:

1. Require the double-bonus condition for every goal to count at all, rather than as a bonus on top of a standard goal.
2. Reduce numbers to 7v7 on the same large area, increasing individual running demand.
3. Add a genuine offside line, sharpening the timing of depth runs.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the area to 50 x 34 m while keeping the same zone structure.
2. Make the double bonus a simple bonus point rather than a doubled goal, lowering the pressure to force it.
3. Add one floating neutral to help under-strength teams find the wide/deep picture more easily.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Team plays direct and narrow out of habit, ignoring the large space available	Old habits are strongest under fatigue and at the end of a demanding session	Repeated central, direct play with wide channels standing empty	Stop	Short group intervention: point to the empty channels, ask why they're empty	Resume from the next restart
Recovery after losing possession is slow and disorganised	The cost of a stretched shape is being felt for the first time this week	Clean opposition break exploiting the space the team's own width/depth left behind	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question the group on what the recovery picture should have looked like	Resume
Fatigue-driven technical breakdown late in the practice	This is deliberately the week's most physically demanding practice, placed last	Passing accuracy visibly drops in the final five minutes	Let it flow	Light-touch encouragement — expected, not a fault, at this stage of pre-season	Continue

Coach interventions used in this practice: a mix of *short group intervention* early and *drive-by coaching* throughout; reserve *post-practice review* comments for the one-minute reflection immediately after.

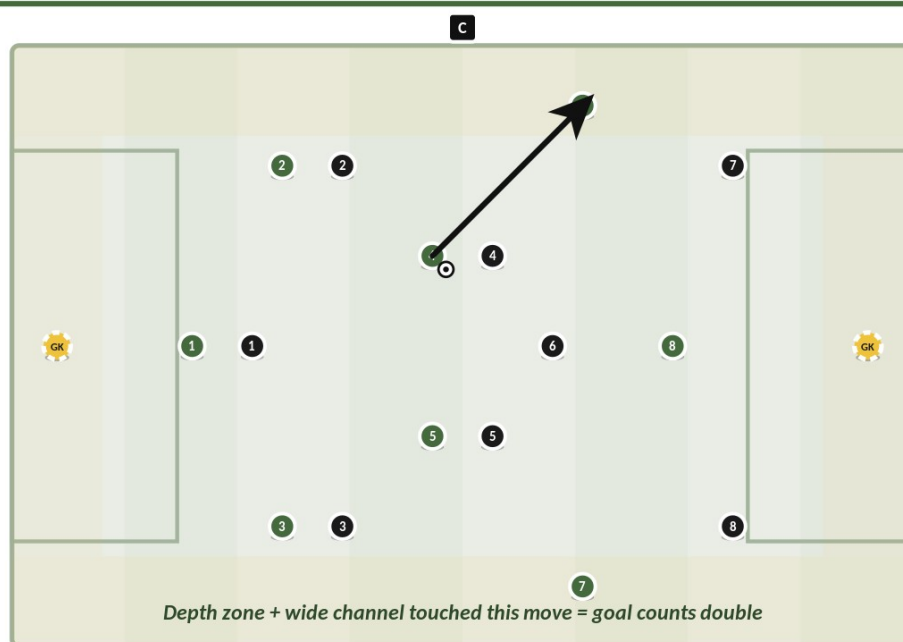
Success indicators:

- At least one clear double-bonus goal scored.
- Wide channels are used by more than one or two "designated" players — width is a team behaviour, not an individual specialism, this week.
- Recovery shape after a turnover is visibly faster in the second half of the practice than the first.

Coach's eye: watch the distance between your team's front line and back line independent of the ball — if it grows beyond a comfortable coaching distance (roughly 25–30 m at this level) for a sustained spell, the team has drifted from "good depth" into "disconnected," which is exactly the boundary Week 3's compactness principle exists to manage properly.

T2.4 FULL WIDTH, FULL DEPTH — Conditioned Match

60 x 40 m • 8v8 + GKs • both wide channels + both end zones must be used before scoring • 15 minutes



Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 2 • Diagrams not to scale

AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing a 60x40 metre pitch with penalty box markings at both ends, full-size goals with goalkeepers in yellow at each end, and four lightly shaded zones marking two wide channels and two depth zones. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch in match shape. White football near an advanced green player. Thick black solid arrow showing a long progression pass toward the attacking depth zone. Title: 'FULL WIDTH, FULL DEPTH — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '60 x 40 m • 8v8 + GKs • both wide channels + both end zones must be used before scoring • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Wide elevated view of a full-scale 8v8 conditioned match on a large grass area, full-size goals with goalkeepers at each end, green-bibbed team spread across marked wide and deep zones, a long diagonal pass in flight toward an advanced green-bibbed player near the attacking depth zone, black-bibbed opposition stretched thin trying to cover the space, coach on the touchline near halfway taking in the whole picture.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): *"Wide elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 8v8 conditioned football match on a large grass pitch with full-size goals and goalkeepers in yellow at each end. Green-bibbed team spread across the full width and depth of the pitch, a long diagonal pass travelling through the air toward an advanced green-bibbed player near the attacking end. Black-bibbed opposition players stretched thin, visibly struggling to cover the full space. A coach in training kit stands near the halfway line on the touchline, hands on hips, taking in the whole picture. Early evening light with long shadows across a large grass playing area, realistic amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."*

REFLECTION (1 MINUTE)

One question to the group: *"What's the risk of a team that's wide and deep, but forgets how to support the ball?"* — deliberately linking this week's principle back to Week 1's, setting up Thursday's session, which sharpens both together in smaller spaces.

Thursday — Session 4

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	4 of 72
Week	2
Season phase	1 — Pre-Season Foundation
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Width & depth in small spaces
Short summary	Sharpens the week's principle at reduced physical cost — teaching players that width and depth are a way of thinking about space, not a function of how much space is available — and gives the defending team its first taste of organised shape, previewing Week 3's compactness principle.
Tags	`possession` `progression` `unit-work` `set-pieces` `full-squad-practice`
Primary learning objective	Players create width and depth even inside a genuinely small practice area.
Secondary learning objective	The defending team begins to organise a compact shape against a stretching opponent — the week's match-day connection.
Match connection	Most amateur football is played in congested, small pockets of real space, however big the pitch is on paper — this session makes that explicit and coaches the principle to survive it.
Expected tactical outcome	By the end of the session, the team can be seen creating passing distance and depth even when defending pressure is compressing the available space.
Expected physical load	Moderate — lower than Tuesday, as intended for a Thursday.
Recommended intensity	6–7 / 10, rising only in the closing game.
Equipment list	16 footballs · 24 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; Practice 3 explicitly includes the goalkeeper as part of the defending block's depth.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 40 x 30 m (Practice 3) — deliberately smaller than any Tuesday practice, in keeping with the session's theme.
Area layout	A compact central strip, with a smaller adjoining grid for Practices 1 and 2.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 3 drops from 8v8 to 6v6 on a 34x26 m area; Practice 4 becomes 5v5.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 3 can extend to 9v9 or 10v10, which suits the session well — more players in a small space is precisely the congestion problem this week is built to solve.
Contingency — restricted space	This session already assumes limited space, so a genuinely restricted facility barely changes it — reduce Practice 3's area modestly and continue as planned.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:08	8 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Quick Feet, Wide Feet</i>	Light green
0:08–0:23	15 min	Technical practice — <i>The Stretched Square</i>	Club green
0:23–0:25	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:25–0:40	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Shape Without the Ball</i>	Dark green
0:40–0:42	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:42–0:59	17 min	Small-sided game — <i>Width Wins</i>	Black
0:59–1:00	1 min → extended below	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — QUICK FEET, WIDE FEET (ARRIVAL)

Duration: 8 minutes · **Training load:** Low

Tactical purpose: A shorter, sharper Thursday warm-up carrying a light technical theme (quick, wide first touches) that feeds directly into the session's principle without raising physical load unnecessarily.

Organisation: 16 x 12 m grid, one ball per player for three minutes, pairs for five. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully. Coach circulating.

Walkthrough: Individual ball work with an emphasis on touches that take the ball away from the body (wide touches) rather than under it, then paired passing where receivers must move to a position at least three metres from their starting spot before every pass.

Rules: No pass to a receiver standing still.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* first touch that creates immediate distance from the nearest defender.
- *Physical:* short, sharp movement bursts — low overall load.

PRACTICE 2 — THE STRETCHED SQUARE (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

Duration: 15 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate

Tactical purpose: Deliberately contradicts the instinct that width and depth require a big pitch. In a genuinely small grid, players must still use every corner rather than bunching centrally — the exact skill that matters most in a real, congested amateur match.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 14 x 14 m
- **Players:** 9 outfield (6 possession + 3 defenders)
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 3
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 4 flat markers (corners), 2 footballs
- **Starting positions:** four possession players in the four corners, two more centrally on the grid's edges (see diagram)
- **Ball supply:** spare ball with the coach
- **Restart:** nearest corner player restarts
- **Coach position:** just outside the grid
- **Rotation method:** every two minutes
- **Direction of play:** none

Practice walkthrough: Six possession players occupy a small grid against three defenders. The explicit instruction: every corner of the grid must have a player in or near it at all times — a genuinely difficult ask in a space this size, and one that requires constant, small adjustments rather than the larger, occasional movements Tuesday's bigger practices demanded. The two players not in a corner occupy the mid-points of two opposite edges, completing the stretched shape.

Rules: Two-touch maximum. If a corner is left empty for more than a few seconds, the coach calls "corner!" as a cue, not a stoppage, for the nearest free player to fill it.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* every player has a "home" area (a corner or an edge) they are responsible for keeping populated, while still being available to receive.
- *Unit:* the six-player shape must hold its stretched form even as defenders press and compress the space.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* on winning the ball, defenders try to hold the same stretched shape for two passes before the practice resets.

Decision-making triggers:

- My corner or edge is empty → I fill it before I look for the ball.
- A defender presses into my area → I hold my width/depth rather than collapsing toward the ball for safety.
- The ball travels to the opposite side of the grid → I check my zone is still covered before reacting to the ball.

Communication language used: *Time, Squeeze* (used by defenders compressing the small space).

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Very sharp, small-range first touches — the technical demand of a small space is different from, not lesser than, a large one.
Tactical	Holding shape under compression rather than collapsing it for safety.
Physical	High-frequency, low-distance movement — a different physical stimulus from Tuesday's longer running.

CORNER	POINT
Psychological	Comfort playing under a genuinely tight press without abandoning the picture.
Communication & leadership	Calling a team-mate back into an empty corner immediately, not after the ball has already been lost there.

Guided discovery questions:

1. How is holding width and depth in a space this small different from doing it in Tuesday's larger grid?
2. What happened when a corner was left empty, even briefly?
3. Why might this small-space version actually be closer to a real match than Tuesday's bigger practices?
4. What did the defenders do to try to force the shape to collapse?
5. How does this idea apply to a real match played on a heavy, cramped pitch with poor conditions?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the grid further to 12 x 12 m.
2. Add a fourth defender.
3. Introduce one-touch play once the shape is holding consistently.

Regressions:

1. Enlarge the grid slightly to 16 x 16 m.
2. Reduce to two defenders.
3. Allow the coach to call "corner!" as a repeated, ongoing prompt rather than an occasional cue.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Shape collapses toward the ball under pressure	Old instinct to seek safety near the ball reasserts itself in a small space	All six players drift into one half of the grid	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset two players to their corners, ask why the shape broke	Resume
Players static in their corner rather than making small adjustments	Over-literal reading of "hold your corner"	No lateral movement within the corner area at all	Let it flow with a drive-by call	"Small movements — stay available, don't go still"	Continue

Coach interventions used in this practice: mostly *drive-by coaching*, one *freeze-and-correct* if the shape collapses early, since the whole practice depends on the group feeling the shape before anything else is layered on.

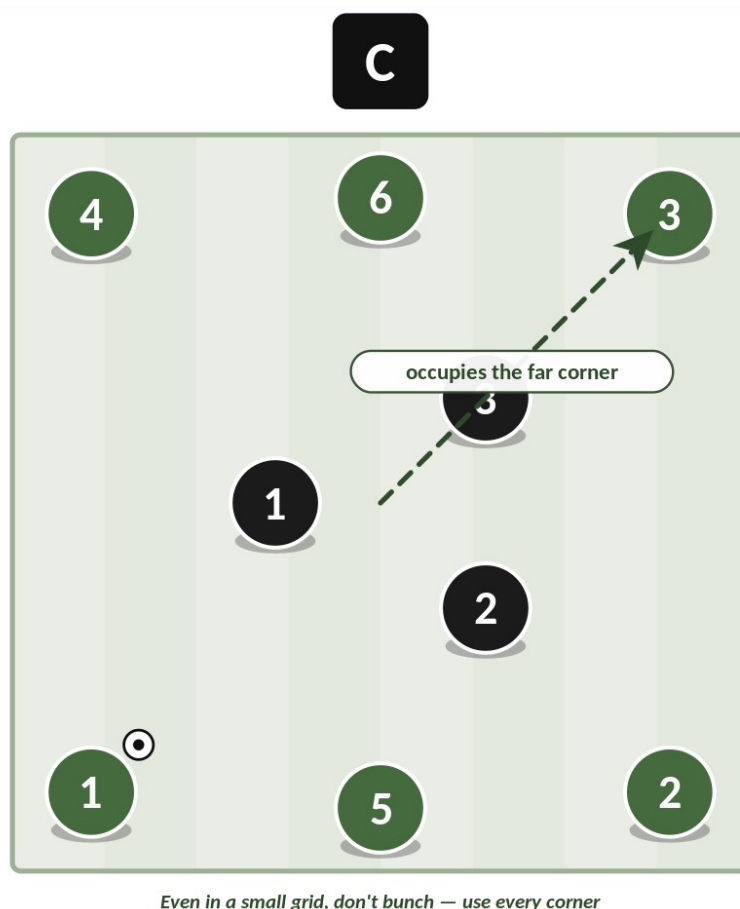
Success indicators:

- All four corners remain populated for the large majority of the practice.
- Passing tempo stays high despite the small space.
- Defenders' pressing has visibly less effect on team shape by the end of the practice than at the start.

Coach's eye: in a small grid, watch feet more than the ball — small adjustment steps are the tell that a player is actively holding their space rather than passively standing in it.

H2.2 THE STRETCHED SQUARE — Width & Depth in a Small Space

14 x 14 m • 6v3 • possession team must use all four corners • 15 minutes



● Possession team ● Defenders ⊙ Ball ➡ Move to the corner

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A small 14x14 metre grid with dimension labels. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6, four positioned in the four corners and two on opposite mid-edges. Three players in black bibs numbered 1–3 positioned centrally. A small white football near player 1. Green dashed arrow labelled 'occupies the far corner' showing a player moving into an empty corner. Small dark coach icon below the grid. Title: 'THE STRETCHED SQUARE — Width & Depth in a Small Space'. Subtitle: '14 x 14 m • 6v3 • possession team must use all four corners • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Close elevated view of a small marked grid, green-bibbed players occupying all four corners and two edge positions, three black-bibbed defenders pressing centrally and compressing the space, a green-bibbed player taking a sharp small touch away from a defender, coach close to the grid edge observing feet and positioning closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Close elevated three-quarter photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football players in a small marked grid on a grass training pitch, roughly 14x14 metres. Six players in dark green bibs occupying the four corners and two edge positions, three players in black bibs pressing tightly in the centre, compressing the space. One green-bibbed player taking a sharp, small touch to escape a closing defender. A coach crouches close to the grid, watching players' feet and positioning intently. Early evening light, realistic grass texture,

amateur adult players of varied build in training kit. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 3 — SHAPE WITHOUT THE BALL (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

Duration: 15 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate

Tactical purpose: The season's first meaningful look at the defending team's shape — introduced lightly here as the natural counterpart to an attacking team practising width and depth, and formalised properly as "compactness" in Week 3. This practice is this week's direct answer to the match-day connection: the squad begins to show organised shape without the ball.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 30 m
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 1 goalkeeper (defending team's), rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the defending team's goalkeeper is included as part of the compact block, organising the line in front of them — a light, early rehearsal of a leadership role that grows across the season
- **Team sizes:** 8 v 8 (+ 1 GK for the defending team only, this practice)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 8 flat markers marking a loose "block" reference zone, 4 cones
- **Starting positions:** attacking team spread wide and deep per this week's principle; defending team organised in two banks (a back line and a midfield line)
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** possession restarts with the attacking team after any defensive win, to maximise repetitions of the attacking picture against the block
- **Coach position:** behind the defending team, able to see both banks and the attacking picture they face
- **Rotation method:** teams swap roles at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** attacking team always attacks the same direction

Practice walkthrough: The attacking team is asked to reproduce this week's principle — genuine width and depth — against a defending team that is, for the first time this season, given an explicit organisational job: hold two connected banks of players close enough together that no easy pass can be threaded between the lines. The defending team is not yet asked to press aggressively (that begins in Week 3) — only to hold its shape compact and organised while the attacking team tries to stretch it apart. This is deliberately named to players as a preview: "what you're defending today, you'll learn to press properly in two weeks."

Rules: Attacking team scores by completing a pass that breaks between the defending team's two banks; defending team "scores" a point for every 60 seconds it maintains a connected, compact shape without conceding a line-breaking pass. Play continuously with the coach tracking both.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* attacking players occupy width/depth roles as established this week; defending players each hold a position within one of the two banks, responsible for the gap either side of them as much as for their direct opponent.
- *Unit:* the defending team's two banks must move together — if the back line drops, the midfield line drops with it, preserving the connection between them.
- *Team:* the defending team functions as a single block, not two separate lines making independent decisions.
- *Transition:* not the focus this week — kept simple by restarting possession with the attacking team after every defensive success, protecting repetitions of the core idea.

Decision-making triggers (defending team):

- The attacking team stretches wide → the block holds its width at a sensible distance rather than following every wide player individually and losing its central compactness.
- A gap opens between the two banks → the nearer line adjusts before the pass arrives, not after.
- The ball moves to the far side → the whole block shifts across together, not just the nearest player.

Communication language used: *Squeeze* (the defending block's primary call this practice), *Travel* (attacking team, as in Tuesday's session).

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Defensive players' scanning — checking the shape of their own line as often as they check the ball.
Tactical	The first formal introduction of a connected, two-bank defensive shape — the foundation Week 3's compactness principle builds on directly.
Physical	Lateral shifting movement for the defending team — a different, valuable physical stimulus from the running demanded elsewhere this week.
Psychological	Patience for the defending team, who are not yet allowed to press aggressively and must resist the urge to chase the ball individually.
Communication & leadership	The defending goalkeeper's voice organising the shape in front of them — introduced explicitly this week as part of their job, not an optional extra.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the defending team have to do differently when the attacking team used a corner zone compared to when they played centrally?
2. Why might a coach ask a defending team to hold shape before asking them to press?
3. What is the connection between this practice and Tuesday's "full width, full depth" conditioned match?
4. If you were the defending goalkeeper, what would you be watching for and calling?
5. How does a connected block differ from two separate lines of players who happen to be near each other?
6. What will change about this practice in two weeks, when pressing is added?

Progressions:

1. Allow the defending team to press one line at a time (front line only) while the back line holds, a first taste of coordinated pressing.
2. Reduce the "safe" gap the coach allows between the two banks before awarding the attacking team a point.
3. Add a transition condition: on winning the ball, the defending team has five seconds to complete three passes before possession resets, connecting this practice to next week's material.

Regressions:

1. Reduce to 6v6 (+GK), easing the organisational demand on the defending team.
2. Widen the "safe gap" tolerance while the block habit is being learned.
3. Allow the coach to call out corrections to the defending shape in real time rather than only awarding/deducting points.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
One or two individual defenders chase the ball out of the block, breaking the connection	Old instinct to defend the ball rather than the team shape	A visible gap opens where a defender has stepped out alone	Stop	Short group intervention: walk the block back into shape, name the gap that was created	Resume
The two banks drift apart vertically over time	Concentration lapses across a 15-minute practice	Distance between the back line and midfield line growing gradually	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question the defending team: "what's happened to the gap between our two lines?"	Resume
Defending team becomes purely passive, not even	Told not to press, some players	Little to no lateral shifting when the ball moves	Let it flow with a drive-	"You're not pressing, but you are still moving — squeeze across"	Continue

x 30 m · 8v8 · attacking team stretches, defending team holds a compact block · 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated sideline view of a black-bibbed defending team organised into two visibly connected banks of players, tight and compact, facing a green-bibbed attacking team spread wide across the full pitch width, a pass travelling toward the edge of the black-bibbed block, the defending goalkeeper visible behind the back line gesturing to organise the shape, coach observing from behind the defending team.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Eight players in black bibs organised into two clearly connected, compact banks (a back line and a midfield line close together) on a grass pitch, facing eight players in dark green bibs spread wide and deep around them. A football travelling toward the edge of the black-bibbed block. The defending goalkeeper, visible behind the back line, one arm raised, organising the shape. A coach stands behind the defending team, observing the gap between the two banks closely. Overcast evening light, realistic grass pitch and shadows, amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 4 — WIDTH WINS (SMALL-SIDED GAME)

Duration: 17 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate-high

Tactical purpose: Closes the week with a possession-dominant, confidence-building game rewarding wide combination play finished by a depth run — everything this week has built, without introducing anything new, in keeping with the stated purpose of every Thursday session.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 14 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 7
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 6 flat markers, 4 cones
- **Starting positions:** even split
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** fast, small-sided-game restarts
- **Coach position:** touchline, mobile
- **Rotation method:** none required
- **Direction of play:** standard

Practice walkthrough: A 7v7 game with a bonus: a goal preceded by a wide combination (two or more passes travelling through a wide area) finished by a player arriving from deep or central into the box — a depth run — is worth two goals. Otherwise the game is played with minimal interruption, closing the week's opening block with high-volume, enjoyable, successful play.

Rules: Standard small-sided-game rules; bonus as described, judged by the coach.

Tactical roles: every principle and role named across the week is available; coaching focus is recognition and encouragement.

Decision-making triggers: as established across the week.

Communication language used: the full set introduced so far — *Time, Turn, Hold, Drop, Squeeze, Switch, Travel* — used together under full game pressure.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Finishing technique from cutbacks and low crosses, the natural product of a wide combination.
Tactical	Recognising and rewarding the week's principle in full flow.
Physical	The week's second-highest load, appropriately placed at the end.
Psychological	Finishing the week's opening block on a genuine high.
Communication & leadership	Players organising and encouraging each other with reduced coach input.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did a "double" goal require this week, and how does that connect to Tuesday's practices?
2. Which of this week's two principles — width/depth or the defending block — do you think the team is further ahead on, and why?
3. How does it feel to finish a move that started wide compared to one that started centrally?
4. What is one thing from this week you'd want to see again in Week 3?

- Looking back at Weeks 1 and 2 together, how do angled support and width/depth work together rather than separately?

Progressions:

- Increase the bonus to triple for a wide combination plus an angled third-man pass, tying all three of the season's principles so far together.
- Reduce the grid slightly to raise tempo for the closing minutes.
- Add a golden-goal condition in the final two minutes.

Regressions:

- Widen the grid for a gentler close to the week.
- Remove the bonus condition in the closing minutes for open, unconditioned play.
- Reduce to 5v5 if fatigue is visible.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Fatigue reducing width discipline in the final minutes	Two full weeks of pre-season now behind the group	Players drifting narrow late in the practice	Let it flow	Light-touch encouragement only	Continue
Game becomes stretched and transitional, losing some possession structure	Natural end-of-session tempo rise	More end-to-end play, fewer sustained sequences	Let it flow	None needed	Continue

Coach interventions used in this practice: minimal — encouragement and recognition of good examples.

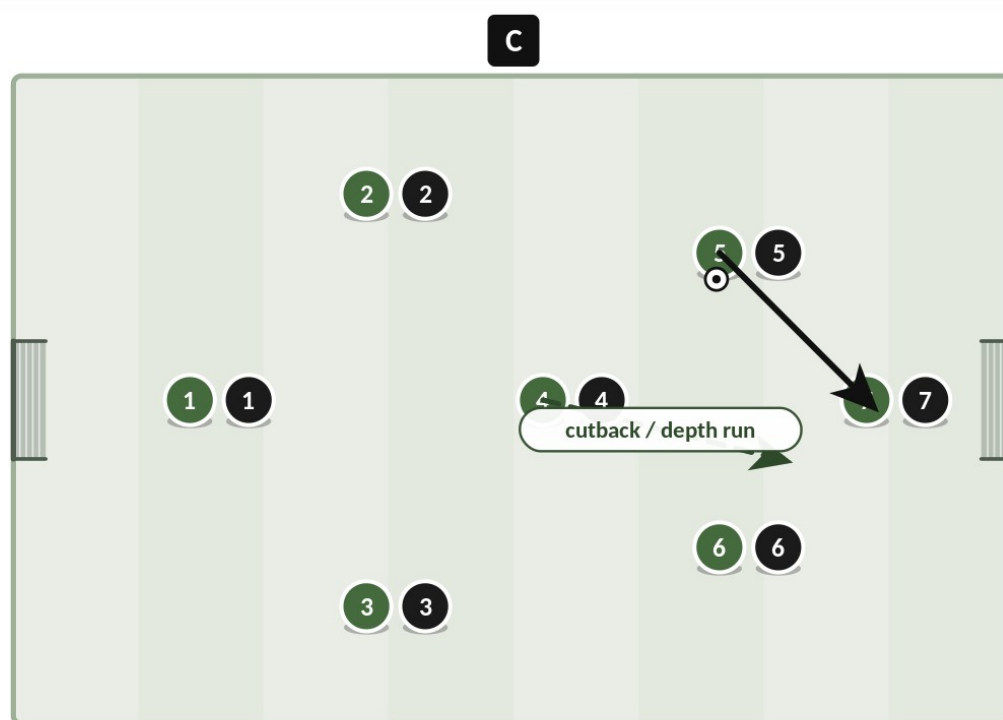
Success indicators:

- Multiple bonus goals scored involving genuine wide combinations.
- High energy and communication maintained into the closing minutes.
- Visible enjoyment and organisation from the players themselves.

Coach's eye: as in Week 1, read the group's mood as closely as their shape — a squad leaving Thursday's session energised is as important a success indicator as any tactical outcome.

H2.4 WIDTH WINS — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • bonus for a wide combination finished by a depth run • 17 minutes



● Team A ● Team B ● Ball ➡ Wide pass ➡ Depth run / cutback

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing a 34x22 metre pitch with a goal at each end. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread across the pitch in a small-sided-game shape. White football near a wide green player. Black solid arrow showing a wide pass toward goal, a green dashed arrow labelled 'cutback / depth run' showing a run into the box. Title: 'WIDTH WINS — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v7 • bonus for a wide combination finished by a depth run • 17 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated sideline view of a lively 7v7 game at dusk, a green-bibbed player crossing or cutting the ball back from a wide position near the goal-line, a team-mate arriving with a well-timed run into the box, black-bibbed defenders reacting late, both goals visible with nets, coach on the touchline relaxed and pleased.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 7v7 football game at dusk on a grass pitch with two full-size goals visible. A player in a dark green bib delivering a cutback pass from a wide position near the goal-line, a team-mate in dark green arriving with a well-timed run into the box to meet it. Opposition players in black bibs reacting a fraction late. Warm, low evening sunlight, long shadows, genuine energy among players. A coach in training kit stands relaxed on the touchline, visibly pleased. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

REFLECTION (FINAL 3–4 MINUTES, SEATED)

Seated as a group, captain(s) present, closing the second and final week of the season's opening block before Week 3 introduces genuine match review.

Questions put to the group:

1. How does this week's idea — using the whole pitch — connect to last week's — finding an angle?
2. What was harder: creating width and depth in a big space on Tuesday, or in a small space on Thursday — and why?
3. What did you notice about defending as a block tonight, and what do you expect will change when we start pressing properly?

Coach's closing input: name two or three specific, positive examples from across the week. Confirm that Week 3 begins genuine match-day review, since pre-season's opening block is now complete and competitive fixtures are close — a marker worth stating plainly to the group.

Match-Day Objectives — Week 2

Still adapted for pre-season — training-ground objectives for the week, in the same format used for match-day objectives from Week 3 onward.

Three team objectives:

1. The team visibly occupies more of the pitch in possession than it did in Week 1, without possession becoming less secure.
2. Width is held by whoever is best placed to hold it in the moment — not by one or two "designated" wide players alone.
3. The defending team can organise and hold a connected two-bank shape for sustained spells without pressing.

Three unit objectives:

- *Defensive unit:* the back line and midfield line move together, preserving the gap between them, when practising as a block.
- *Midfield unit:* central players recognise when to recycle possession centrally rather than forcing width that isn't genuinely on.
- *Attacking unit:* wide players hold their width rather than drifting inside, and at least one player consistently arrives with correct timing into the box from deep or central positions.

Individual role reminders *(assign according to the shape the coach selects):*

- Wide outlet: your width is your job first; involvement in the game comes through good positioning, not by leaving your zone to find the ball.
- Depth runner: time your run to arrive as the ball arrives, not before or after.
- Rest-defence / balance player: your discipline protects the team's ability to play wide and deep elsewhere.
- Goalkeeper (defending block only): organise the line in front of you — this is your job this week as much as shot-stopping.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Visual estimate of pitch area occupied in possession during Practice 4 (Tuesday), compared informally against Week 1's equivalent practice.
- Number of sustained periods (30+ seconds) the defending team holds a connected block shape during Thursday's Practice 3.
- Squad's own account, given in the closing reflection, of how this week's idea connected to last week's — recorded for reference at the Week 5 review.

Formation Translation — Applying This Week Across Different Shapes

Principle: Width & depth.

In a 4-3-3: width comes primarily from the two wide forwards, who are coached to hold the touchline high; depth comes from the centre-forward's threat in behind, supported by underlapping or overlapping full-backs who add a second wide/deep option depending on the picture. The back four's own width (the two full-backs, when not overlapping) provides the team's rest-defence depth on the opposite side of the pitch.

In a 3-5-2: width comes from the two wing-backs, operating from a deeper start position than a 4-3-3's wide forwards but capable of reaching the same advanced wide zones once the team is in possession; depth is shared between the two strikers, with one frequently dropping to link play centrally while the other stays on the last line to threaten the space in behind. The back three's extra central body allows the wing-backs to commit further forward than a full-back typically could without the same rest-defence risk.

What stays the same: the requirement that, in any settled possession, some player is using each touchline and some player is threatening depth — and that this is a team behaviour, coordinated and shared, not a job description permanently fixed to one shirt number.

What changes: how far each width-providing player starts from the touchline (a winger starts wide; a wing-back starts deeper and travels), and how the depth threat is shared (one dedicated striker versus two who alternate the role between them).

What must not change: the discipline of holding width rather than drifting inside "to get on the ball" — the single most common way this principle breaks down at this level, in any formation.

Risk in each structure: a 4-3-3 that loses its wide forwards' discipline collapses into a narrow front three that is easy to defend centrally. A 3-5-2 that commits both wing-backs forward simultaneously without cover risks being caught badly exposed in the wide channels defensively — a risk directly connected to this week's rest-defence discussion and to the transition-to-defence principle the season returns to properly in Week 4.

Opposition influence: against a team that defends narrow and compact, width is usually the more productive route to goal, since the central areas are already well-protected. Against a team that defends wide and aggressively, playing through the centre — using this week's depth principle more than its width principle — can be the better route, a distinction the team will explore further once Phase 3 (Developing Collective Understanding) introduces final-third combination play properly.

Coach Review — Week 2

(To be completed by the coach after both sessions have run, before Week 3 is delivered.)

- **Attendance:** Tuesday ____ / Thursday _____. Consistent with Week 1, or different — and does that change Week 3's contingency planning?
- **Technical/tactical evidence:** did the team visibly use more of the pitch by the end of Tuesday's Practice 4 than in Week 1? Note specific examples.
- **Defensive shape evidence:** how well did the defending team hold its connected block in Thursday's Practice 3 — this is the first real data point for Week 3's compactness work.
- **Communication evidence:** is the language from Week 1 (Time, Turn, Hold, Drop, Squeeze) still being used accurately now that a new principle has been layered on top?
- **Physical observations:** any signs of accumulated fatigue across two weeks of rising pre-season load? Cross-reference against Section 7 of the Season Architecture.
- **Leadership observations:** who is organising the group now, and is it the same players as Week 1 or others stepping forward?
- **Priority for Week 3:** based on the above, does Week 3 (pressure-cover-balance and compactness) need any adjustment to its planned emphasis?

Written by Alan Cunningham with Claude AI · Castlewellan Town FC — Senior Coaching Curriculum, Week 2 of 36 · session design follows the four-corner model used in UEFA coach education and the principle-led, formation-neutral approach set out in the Season Architecture (Stage 1). An independent club resource, not an official UEFA or Irish FA publication and not endorsed by either.