



Week 12 — Developing Collective Understanding

Tags: `possession` `unit-relationships` `combination-play` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	12 of 36
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Core principle	Player between the lines
Secondary principle	Support & passing angles
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Phase 2 taught the team to progress the ball and to protect itself while doing so, but largely treated the team as a collection of individuals and small groups solving problems together. Phase 3 opens by naming something more specific: the <i>relationship</i> between two lines of players — starting with the back line and the first midfield line — as a unit that stretches, compresses and reconnects together, and the specific role of a player who receives inside the gap that opens between two opposition lines. This week is the foundation the rest of Phase 3 builds on.
Formation-neutral explanation	A "line" is not a fixed row of shirt numbers — it is however many players are currently occupying a similar depth on the pitch, and the relationship between two lines (the distance and passing lanes between them) matters regardless of whether four players or three make up either line. Equally, "the player between the lines" is a role, not a position — any player who finds himself in the gap between two opposition lines is doing that job in that moment.
Example structural applications	In a 4-3-3: the back four and the holding/central midfield trio form the first two lines, with a number 10 or a withdrawn striker typically the player most often found between the lines. In a 3-4-3 or back-three structure: the back three and the double pivot form the first two lines, and a player between the lines is just as often one of the front three dropping short as a nominal midfielder. The specific players change; the discipline of keeping the two lines connected, and the job of finding the gap between the opposition's lines, does not.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, look specifically for moments where a central receiver had time and space between the lines but didn't use it fully — a good result can still hide underused central time. Name it plainly.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team struggled to connect its back line and midfield, or rarely found a central receiver between the lines, this week answers it directly — open Tuesday's session with the specific moment from the match.

Route C — Attendance, facilities or player availability are disrupted. The core skill — two connected lines, and a player finding the gap between the opposition's lines — scales to any numbers. Protect the connection-corridor concept above all else this week; it is the foundation for the rest of Phase 3.

Tuesday — Session 23

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	23 of 72
Week	12
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Unit relationships: back line + first midfield line
Short summary	Names and trains the distance and passing-lane relationship between the back line and the first midfield line as a single connected unit, so the team can be pressed against without the two lines being split apart.
Tags	`possession` `unit-relationships` `progression` `conditioning`
Primary learning objective	The back line and first midfield line maintain a connected, functional distance under pressure, stretching and recovering together rather than independently.
Secondary learning objective	Players in the first midfield line consistently offer a passing angle the back line can actually use.
Match connection	This week's foundation for the match-day connection named on Thursday: central receivers turning under less pressure.
Expected tactical outcome	Visibly fewer moments where the back line is isolated from the first midfield line, unable to find a forward passing option.
Expected physical load	Repeated positional actions, moderate-high — a step up in cognitive demand more than raw physical intensity.
Recommended intensity	6.5–7.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 22 flat markers · 14 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, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; in Practice 4 the goalkeeper is coached specifically as part of the back line's connection to the first midfield line, not separate from it.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A positional practice with a marked connection corridor for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 reduces to 5v2; Practice 3 becomes 5v5; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Compress the connection corridor rather than removing it — the relationship between the two lines is the entire teaching point.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Two Lines, One Picture</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>The Elastic Band</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Two Lines Combine</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Build the Picture</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — TWO LINES, ONE PICTURE (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the idea of two connected groups moving together, inside a simple, physical warm-up before any tactical structure is added.

Organisation: 24 x 18 m grid, two lines of players facing each other roughly 8 m apart. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully.

Walkthrough: Two lines of players pass and move together — as one line steps forward, the other steps back, maintaining a consistent distance between them throughout, a simple physical rehearsal of the elastic, connected relationship the session is built around.

Rules: The distance between the two lines must stay within a marked tolerance throughout.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean passing while moving.
- *Physical:* coordinated movement in both directions.
- *Psychological:* awareness of the other line's movement, not just your own.

PRACTICE 2 — THE ELASTIC BAND (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific relationship between the back line and the first midfield line — the distance and passing lanes between them — inside a possession practice against a small number of pressers, so the team feels directly what happens when the connection holds and what happens when it breaks.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 26 m
- **Players:** 7 possession players (4 back line + 3 first midfield line) vs 3 opposition pressers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as part of the back line
- **Team sizes:** 7 (possession) v 3 (pressers)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking a "connection corridor" between the two lines
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach restarts centrally on any stoppage
- **Coach position:** central, able to see both lines
- **Rotation method:** pressers rotate with tired possession players every few minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention

Practice walkthrough: Four back-line players face three opposition pressers, with three first-midfield-line players positioned inside a marked corridor at a set distance ahead. The back line's task is to retain possession and find a forward pass into the midfield line whenever the picture allows it, while the midfield line's task is to stay inside the corridor and continually offer a genuine, receivable angle — not just occupy space inside it.

Rules: The midfield line must stay inside the marked corridor; a forward pass that finds a midfield player under control scores a point.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* each back-line player must recognise when a forward option is genuinely on versus when to recycle.
- *Unit:* the back line and midfield line function as one connected relationship, not two separate groups.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- A midfield player offers a clear, receivable angle inside the corridor → play forward.
- No midfield player is available inside the corridor → recycle and reset, echoing Week 1's "Hold" call.
- The corridor has become too narrow or too wide → the coach calls a reset to restore the working distance.

Communication language used: *Hold, Time, Drop, Turn.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean, accurate passing into the midfield line under pressure.
Tactical	Maintaining a functional distance and passing lane between the two lines at all times.
Physical	Repeated positional adjustments to hold the corridor.
Psychological	Patience to recycle when the forward option isn't genuinely there.
Communication & leadership	The back line calling for midfield players to adjust their position inside the corridor.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What happened to the back line's options when the midfield line drifted too far away?
2. What happened when the midfield line came too close to the back line instead?
3. How did a midfield player make themselves genuinely receivable, rather than just present, inside the corridor?
4. Why might a team deliberately recycle possession rather than force a pass into a crowded corridor?

Progressions:

1. Remove the marked corridor, requiring the team to maintain the correct distance by feel.
2. Add a fourth presser.
3. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the required precision of the connection.

Regressions:

1. Widen the corridor for more time and space.
2. Reduce to two pressers.
3. Allow one free, uncontested reset pass per possession while the concept is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The two lines become disconnected — too much distance between them	The midfield line drifts forward chasing the game rather than holding its relationship to the back line	A visible gap the size of the corridor or larger, with no usable passing lane	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset the distance and explain what broke the connection	Resume
The two lines become too compressed, congesting the same area	Midfield players drop too deep, wary of losing the ball	Back line has no genuine forward option because midfield is too close to be useful	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: midfield players must hold the corridor's far edge, not its near edge	Resume
Back line forces a pass into a covered midfield player	Impatience or a habit from a lower-pressure week	Forced passes intercepted inside the corridor	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that really on, or was recycling the better option?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since the precise distance and shape of the connection is the entire teaching point.

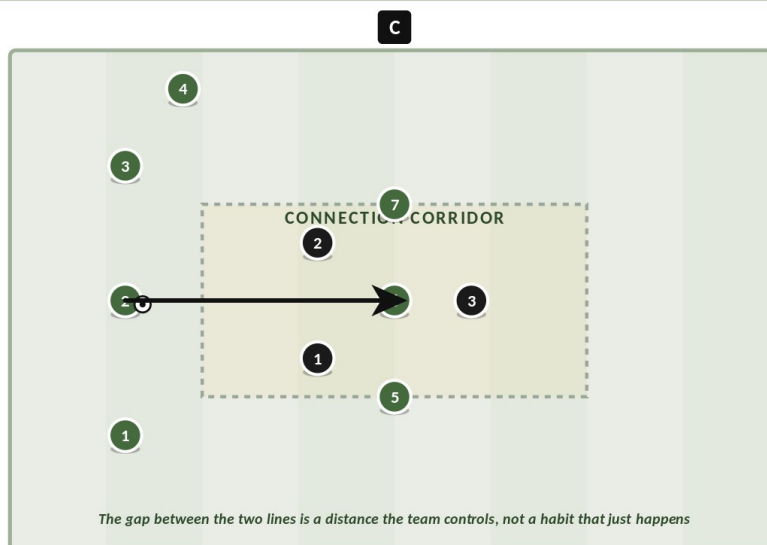
Success indicators:

- The distance between the two lines stays within a functional range throughout.
- Midfield players consistently offer a genuine, receivable angle.
- The back line recycles calmly when the forward option isn't there, rather than forcing it.

Coach's eye: watch the gap itself, not just the ball — a team that keeps the connection intact under pressure is showing exactly what this practice is built to produce.

T12.2 THE ELASTIC BAND — Connecting Two Lines

40 x 26 m • 7v3 • the back line and first midfield line stretch and recover together, never disconnected • 15 minutes



● Back line ● First midfield line ● Opposition pressers ● Ball ■ Connection corridor

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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 40x26 metre grid with dimension labels, showing a shaded corridor zone labelled 'CONNECTION CORRIDOR' between two groups of players. Four players in dark green bibs numbered 1–4 positioned as a back line on the left, three players in dark green bibs numbered 5–7 positioned inside the corridor as a midfield line. Three players in black bibs numbered 1–3 pressing between them. White football near a back-line green player. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass from the back line into the midfield line. Title: 'THE ELASTIC BAND — Connecting Two Lines'. Subtitle: '40 x 26 m • 7v3 • the back line and first midfield line stretch and recover together, never disconnected • 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 showing two distinct groups of green-bibbed players — a back line and a midfield line — separated by a marked corridor, three black-bibbed opponents pressing between them, a pass travelling cleanly from the back line into a midfield player who is turning to face forward, coach centrally positioned observing the distance between both lines.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training on a grid showing two distinct groups of players in dark green bibs — a back line and a midfield line — separated by a marked central corridor. Three players in black bibs pressing in the space between the two green groups. A pass travelling cleanly from a back-line player into a midfield player who is turning to face forward. A coach standing centrally, observing the distance between both lines. 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 — TWO LINES COMBINE (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the connected-lines principle into a genuine small-sided game, rewarding a goal that follows a receiving player turning between the two lines, connecting Tuesday's unit work directly to a real attacking outcome.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 12 outfield, rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 6
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 mini goals, 6 flat markers
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** nearest sideline
- **Coach position:** sideline, central
- **Rotation method:** none required at this scale
- **Direction of play:** both directions, two goals

Practice walkthrough: A 6v6 game in which a goal that follows a player receiving between the opposition's two lines and turning to play forward is worth double. The coach notes, without necessarily announcing, how often the team's own two lines stay connected enough to create this picture in the first place.

Rules: As described; otherwise standard small-sided-game rules.

Tactical roles: the full connected-lines skill set from Practice 2, now inside live, directional play with a genuine attacking consequence.

Decision-making triggers: as established in Practice 2, plus the added decision of when a receiving player should attempt the turn versus lay the ball off safely.

Communication language used: *Turn, Hold, Time, Drop.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean first touch and body shape to turn under pressure between the lines.
Tactical	Recognising the moment to turn versus the moment to lay the ball off.
Physical	Repeated quick actions under close marking.
Psychological	Confidence to receive facing away from goal, knowing the turn is coming.
Communication & leadership	The receiving player calling for support before attempting to turn, if under close pressure.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was your team's clearest example of a successful turn between the lines tonight?
2. How did the two lines stay connected enough to create that picture?
3. What happened when a player attempted a turn under too much pressure?
4. How does this connect to Week 1's support-and-angles principle — what should be happening around the receiving player?

Progressions:

1. Add a condition that the turn must be completed within two touches.
2. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the receiving player.
3. Add a genuine offside line at each end.

Regressions:

1. Allow a lay-off (rather than a full turn) to also count for the bonus while confidence is being built.
2. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
3. Reduce to 4v4 for more individual involvement.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Players attempt to turn under pressure that clearly isn't there to turn into	Eagerness to chase the bonus condition	Turns attempted directly into a marker, losing possession	Stop	Short group intervention: "was that space to turn into, or not?"	Resume
The two lines disconnect, removing the picture entirely	Old habit reasserting itself under game pressure	No genuine receiving option appears between the lines all game	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "where were our two lines just then?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: a mix of *short group intervention* and *questioning*.

Success indicators:

- Bonus-condition goals increase across the practice.
- Turns are attempted only when genuine space is available.
- The team's two lines stay connected often enough to create the picture repeatedly.

Coach's eye: watch the body shape of the receiving player before the ball arrives — a player already shaped to turn has usually already read the picture correctly.

T12.3 TWO LINES COMBINE — Small-Sided Game

34 x 22 m • 6v6 • a goal following a combination between the two lines, with a turn in between, is worth double • 15 minutes

C

● Team in possession

● Opposition

○ Ball

→ Line-to-line combination

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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 34x22 metre pitch with a small goal at each end. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1-6 and six players in black bibs numbered 1-6 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. A black solid

arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass into a green player positioned between two black players. Title: 'TWO LINES COMBINE — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 6v6 · a goal following a combination between the two lines, with a turn in between, is worth double · 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 6v6 game, a green-bibbed player receiving the ball between two black-bibbed opponents and turning sharply to face forward, team-mates arriving in support, both mini goals visible, coach on the touchline tracking the moment closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 6v6 small-sided football game on a grass pitch with two mini goals. A player in a dark green bib receiving the ball between two opponents in black bibs and turning sharply to face forward. Team-mates in matching dark green bibs arriving in support. Late-afternoon light, realistic grass pitch and shadows, amateur adult players of varied build. A coach on the touchline, tracking the moment closely. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 4 — BUILD THE PICTURE (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, requiring the back line and first midfield line to stay genuinely connected under a live, reactive press, so the whole team can build attacks through a stable, usable shape rather than a scattered one.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role and are coached specifically as part of the back line's connection to the midfield line

- **Team sizes:** 8 v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 8 flat markers, corner cones
- **Starting positions:** standard match shape
- **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: A conditioned 8v8 match in which the team building the attack is coached specifically on the relationship between its back line and first midfield line, with the coach noting (without necessarily stopping play) how often the two lines stay genuinely connected under the opposition's live pressing picture.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules.

Tactical roles: the full connected-lines and between-the-lines skill set from Practices 2–3, combined for the first time with a genuinely reactive opponent at match scale.

Decision-making triggers: the full set from Practices 2–3, applied under match conditions with a moving, live opponent.

Communication language used: the full season's language so far.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution under full match pressure and fatigue.
Tactical	Genuine, live maintenance of the connection between the back line and midfield line.
Physical	Repeated positional adjustments combined with the week's peak physical demand.
Psychological	Composure to hold the correct distance rather than reacting individually to pressure.
Communication & leadership	The back line and midfield line organising their shared distance out loud.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of a well-connected back line and midfield line tonight?
2. When did the connection break down, and what caused it?
3. How did a central receiver benefit from the two lines staying connected?
4. How does this connect to Week 10's overload-and-rest-defence decision-making — are the two ideas related?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine offside line.
2. Reduce numbers to 7v7.
3. Instruct the opposition to press higher and more aggressively, testing the connection under greater strain.

Regressions:

1. Instruct the opposition to press less aggressively while the connection is being consolidated.
2. Reduce to 6v6 on a smaller area.
3. Reintroduce Practice 2's marked connection corridor briefly if the shape has broken down under full match conditions.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The back line and midfield line disconnect under match pressure	Habitual, individual reactions to pressure reassert themselves against a real, moving opponent	A visible, unusable gap between the two lines for sustained periods	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
Central receivers are found but rushed into losing the ball	The picture is created but not yet trusted under full pressure	Turns attempted and lost immediately after receiving	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was there support around that receiver?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: a mix of *short group intervention* and *questioning*, reserving deeper correction for the reflection immediately after.

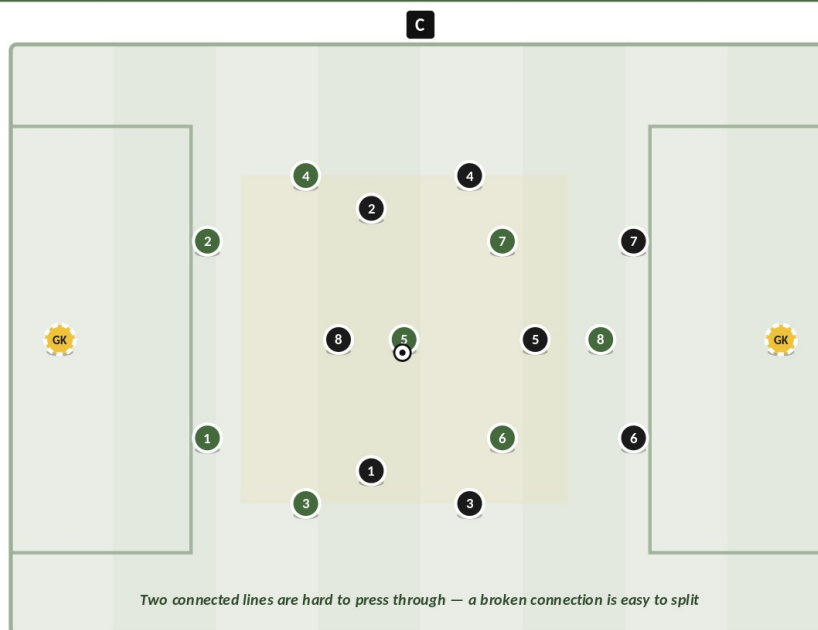
Success indicators:

- The back line and midfield line maintain a functional connection for longer periods than in Practice 2.
- Central receivers are found and supported more often as the practice progresses.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, when and why the connection held or broke.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of whether Tuesday's teaching has transferred — judge it specifically against how long the connection holds under genuine, live pressure.

T12.4 BUILD THE PICTURE — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • the back line and midfield line stay connected under a live press • 15 minutes



● Team in possession ● Opposition ● GK ● Ball ■ Connection corridor

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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 half of a football pitch, 50x36 metres, with penalty box markings at both ends and a full-size goal at each end with a goalkeeper in yellow at each. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the area, with a shaded corridor zone in the middle labelled as a connection zone. White football near a central green player. Title: 'BUILD THE PICTURE — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • the back line and midfield line stay connected under a live press • 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, a clearly connected back line and midfield line of green-bibbed players maintaining a consistent, usable distance under pressure from black-bibbed opponents, coach on the touchline near halfway tracking 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 half-size grass pitch with full-size goals and goalkeepers in yellow at each end. A clearly connected back line and midfield line of players in dark green bibs maintaining a consistent, usable distance under pressure from opponents in black bibs. A coach stands near the halfway line on the touchline, tracking the whole picture. Early evening light with long shadows, realistic grass pitch markings, 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: "Name one moment tonight where our back line and midfield line stayed properly connected under pressure."

Thursday — Session 24

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	24 of 72
Week	12
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Playing between the lines
Short summary	Builds directly on Tuesday's connected-lines work by teaching the specific technical and tactical skill of receiving in the pockets between an opposition's lines, turning under control, and using the picture that opens up.
Tags	`possession` `receiving` `body-shape` `unit-work`
Primary learning objective	Players receiving between the lines consistently show correct body shape to turn before the ball arrives.
Secondary learning objective	The team recognises which of several possible pockets is genuinely open at a given moment, rather than forcing the ball into a crowded one.
Match connection	The week's named match-day connection: central receivers turning under less pressure.
Expected tactical outcome	More frequent, cleaner turns by central receivers, with fewer heavy touches or immediate losses of possession.
Expected physical load	Repeated actions, moderate-high — short, sharp receiving and turning actions rather than sustained running.
Recommended intensity	6.5–7.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 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, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; in Practice 3 the goalkeeper is included as a possible source of the first pass into the pocket.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 46 x 30 m (Practice 3).
Area layout	A technical grid for Practice 2, widening into a full positional area for Practice 3, then a small-sided game for Practice 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 3 reduces to 6v6; Practice 2 and 4 scale down proportionally.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 3 can extend to 9v9, adding a fourth marked pocket.
Contingency — restricted space	Reduce the number of marked pockets in Practice 3 from three to two before reducing the overall area — the core skill survives fewer options better than a smaller space.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Shape to Turn</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Turn in the Pocket</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Pockets</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Pocket Money</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — SHAPE TO TURN (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the specific body-shape technique — receiving side-on, scanning before the ball arrives — that the whole session is built around.

Organisation: 20 x 16 m grid, pairs. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully.

Walkthrough: Paired passing in which the receiving player must check their shoulder before every reception and immediately turn to face a called direction, rehearsing the scan-and-turn sequence in isolation before any opposition is added.

Rules: The receiving player must check over their shoulder before the ball arrives, every repetition.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* body shape and first touch direction on the turn.
- *Psychological:* the habit of scanning before receiving, not after.

PRACTICE 2 — TURN IN THE POCKET (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific technique of receiving inside a marked pocket between two opposition lines and turning to face forward, so the technical foundation is reliable before the full positional practice adds real decision-making about which pocket to use.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 30 x 20 m
- **Players:** 6 possession players vs 4 opposition (2 forming a "back line," 2 forming a "midfield line")
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 4
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the pocket zone
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach restarts centrally on any stoppage
- **Coach position:** central, able to see the whole picture
- **Rotation method:** opposition rotates with tired possession players every few minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention, working toward the pocket

Practice walkthrough: Two pairs of opposition players form two lines with a marked pocket between them. The possession team's task is to play a pass into a receiving player who has moved into the pocket, who must check their shoulder before receiving and turn to face the open side of the practice.

Rules: The receiver must complete a genuine turn (not simply a lay-off) to score a point; a heavy touch or a turn directly into a defender does not count.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the receiver's body shape and scanning technique is the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* the passer must time the pass to the receiver's movement into the pocket, not before.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- The receiver's shoulder check shows space to turn into → attempt the turn.
- The receiver's shoulder check shows a defender close behind → lay the ball off instead, echoing Week 1's angled-support principle.

Communication language used: *Turn, Time, Hold.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Body shape on receiving; first touch direction on the turn.
Tactical	Reading the picture before the ball arrives, not after.
Physical	Sharp, explosive turning actions.
Psychological	Confidence to receive facing away from the target, trusting the scan.
Communication & leadership	The passer confirming the receiver is ready before playing the pass.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the shoulder check tell the receiver before the ball arrived?
2. What happened on the repetitions where the receiver didn't check their shoulder first?
3. Why is a lay-off sometimes the correct decision even though a turn is the more exciting outcome?
4. How does this connect to Week 9's near-post/far-post timing work — is reading the picture early a common thread?

Progressions:

1. Add a third opposition line, requiring the receiver to also consider what's beyond the immediate picture.
2. Reduce the time allowed between the shoulder check and the ball's arrival.
3. Add a condition that the turn must be completed in two touches or fewer.

Regressions:

1. Allow the receiver to take an extra touch to settle before turning while the technique is being learned.
2. Widen the pocket zone for more space.
3. Reduce the opposition to 2 v 6 (both lines).

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Receiver doesn't check their shoulder before receiving	Habit of focusing only on the ball	Turns are attempted blind, resulting in heavy touches or losses	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: demonstrate the scan-and-turn sequence again	Resume
Receiver attempts a turn despite a defender being close behind	Eagerness to turn rather than reading the picture accurately	Turns lost immediately to a defender arriving from behind	Stop	Short group intervention: "what did the shoulder check actually show you?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since correct body shape and scanning technique are the entire teaching point.

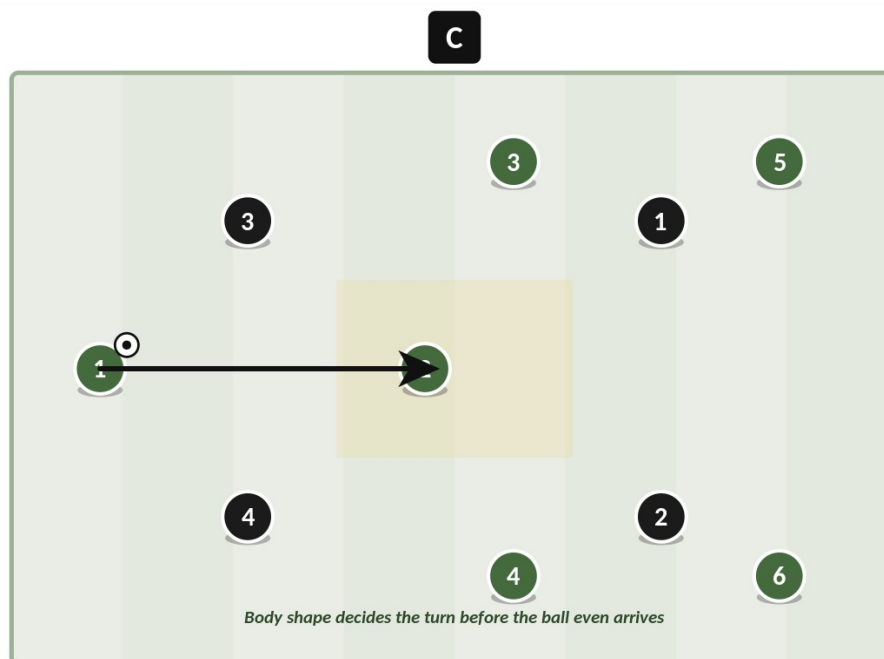
Success indicators:

- Receivers consistently check their shoulder before the ball arrives.
- Turns are attempted only when genuine space is available.
- First touch on the turn is clean and purposeful.

Coach's eye: watch the receiver's head and shoulders before the ball arrives, not just their feet after — the scan is the actual skill being taught.

H12.2 TURN IN THE POCKET — Receiving Between the Lines

30 x 20 m • 6v4 • receive side-on in the pocket, then turn to face the picture ahead • 15 minutes



● Possession team ● Opposition lines ● Ball ➔ Pass into the pocket ■ The pocket

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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 30x20 metre grid with dimension labels. A shaded pocket zone in the middle of the grid. Two players in black bibs forming a back line on the right, two players in black bibs forming a midfield line on the left, with the pocket zone between them. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6 spread around the outside. White football near a green player on the left. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass into the pocket zone. Title: 'TURN IN THE POCKET — Receiving Between the Lines'. Subtitle: '30 x 20 m • 6v4 • receive side-on in the pocket, then turn to face the picture ahead • 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, a green-bibbed player receiving the ball inside a marked central pocket with their body turned side-on, head checking over one shoulder just before the ball arrives, two black-bibbed defenders positioned on either side, coach centrally positioned observing the body shape closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. A player in a dark green bib receiving the ball in a central area of the grid, body positioned side-on, head turned to check over one shoulder just as the ball arrives. Two players in black bibs positioned at a slight distance on either side. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the receiving player's body shape. 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 — POCKETS (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the single-pocket technical work into a full positional practice with three marked pockets, teaching the team to recognise which pocket is genuinely open at a given moment rather than forcing the ball into whichever one is nearest or most familiar.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 46 x 30 m
- **Players:** 16 outfield
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through the possession team
- **Team sizes:** 8 v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking three pocket zones
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** nearest player restarts any stoppage
- **Coach position:** mobile, able to see all three pockets
- **Rotation method:** roles swap at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** positional possession, working toward whichever pocket is open

Practice walkthrough: Three pockets are marked across the practice area — one central, two either side of it. The possession team's task is to recognise, in real time, which of the three is genuinely open (based on where the opposition's shape is currently concentrated) and to get the ball into a receiver there, who then turns and plays forward.

Rules: Standard positional possession rules; a successful reception and turn inside any of the three pockets scores a point, regardless of which one is used.

Tactical roles: the full receiving-and-turning skill set from Practice 2, now combined with the decision of which of three options is genuinely available.

Decision-making triggers:

- Opposition shape is concentrated around one pocket → look to the other two.
- A pocket is genuinely open and a receiver is moving into it → play the pass.
- No pocket is currently open → recycle possession and wait for the picture to change.

Communication language used: *Turn, Time, Hold, Switch.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Receiving and turning technique, now applied inside a less predictable, larger picture.
Tactical	Recognising which of three pockets is genuinely open, not just available.
Physical	Repeated, quick decision-making and positional adjustments.
Psychological	Patience to wait for a genuine opportunity rather than forcing a crowded pocket.
Communication & leadership	Players outside the pockets calling which one looks open for the player in possession.

Guided discovery questions:

1. How did you decide which of the three pockets was genuinely open at a given moment?
2. What told you a pocket was crowded rather than open?

3. How does this connect to Week 9's switching-the-point-of-attack principle — is recognising an open pocket a similar skill to recognising a free side?
4. What is the risk of always looking to the same, most familiar pocket?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the pockets from three to two, sharpening the decision.
2. Add a live opposition scoring incentive (a goal for a clean regain).
3. Reduce the practice area, increasing pressure on both the decision and the execution.

Regressions:

1. Allow the coach to call out which pocket is open for the first several repetitions.
2. Widen the practice area for more time.
3. Reduce to three pockets with only one occupied by opposition at a time.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Team repeatedly targets the same pocket regardless of whether it's open	Habit or comfort with a specific pattern	The same pocket is attempted even when clearly crowded	Stop	Short group intervention: "which pocket does the picture actually show us right now?"	Resume
Team hesitates and never commits to any pocket	Overcorrection toward caution after being taught to recognise crowding	Possession circulates without ever attempting a genuine pocket entry	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was there a pocket we should have used there?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: a mix of *short group intervention* and *questioning*.

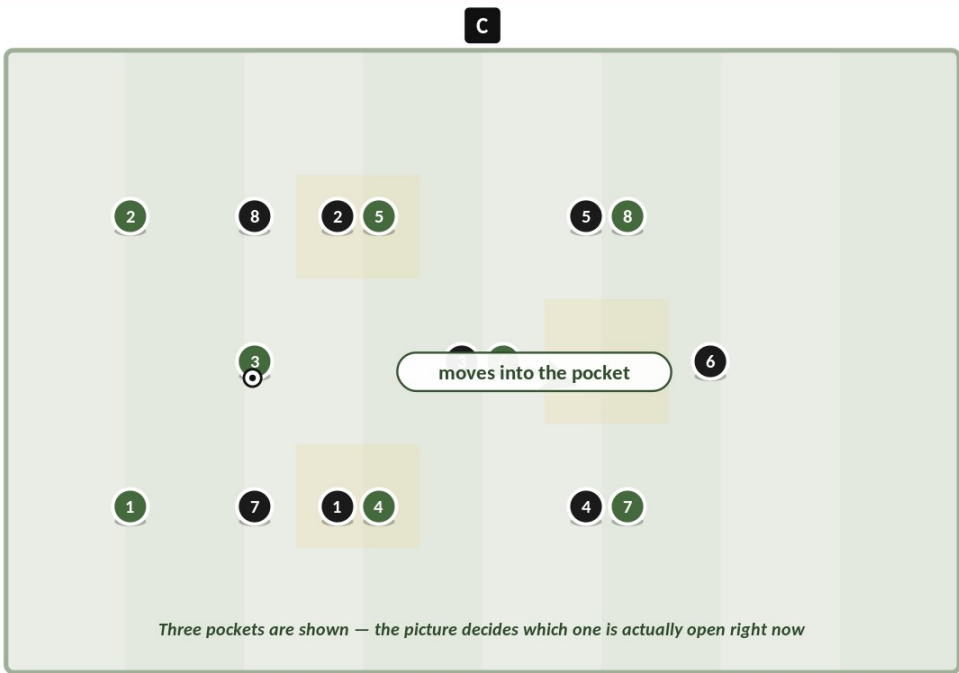
Success indicators:

- The team varies which pocket it uses based on the genuine picture, not habit.
- Successful receptions and turns increase across the practice.
- Players outside the pockets are heard calling which one looks open.

Coach's eye: watch the opposition's shape as closely as your own team's — a player who has correctly read where the opposition is concentrated will already be looking elsewhere before being told to.

H12.3 POCKETS — Finding Space Between the Lines

46 x 30 m • 8v8 • identify and occupy the pockets the opposition's shape leaves open • 15 minutes



● Possession team ● Opposition ● Ball ■ Pockets between the lines
➡ Movement into the pocket

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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 46x30 metre area with dimension labels, showing three shaded pocket zones — two smaller ones near each sideline and one larger central one. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the area. White football near a green player. A short dashed run arrow labelled 'moves into the pocket' showing a green player moving into the central shaded zone. Title: 'POCKETS — Finding Space Between the Lines'. Subtitle: '46 x 30 m • 8v8 • identify and occupy the pockets the opposition's shape leaves open • 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 wide view of a large positional practice, three loosely marked pocket areas visible across the pitch, a green-bibbed player moving purposefully into the central pocket as a team-mate prepares to pass, the opposition's black-bibbed shape visibly concentrated elsewhere, coach observing from a central vantage point.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated wide three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur football positional practice on a grass pitch, with three loosely marked zones visible across the playing area. A player in a dark green bib moving purposefully into the central zone as a team-mate prepares to play a pass. The opposition, in black bibs, visibly concentrated in a different area of the pitch. A coach observing from a central vantage point, holding a notebook. 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 4 — POCKET MONEY (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that requires every goal to follow a player receiving and turning between the lines, reinforcing the week's technical and tactical work inside a genuinely fun context that sends players into the weekend confident.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 14 outfield, rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 7
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 6 flat markers
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** nearest sideline
- **Coach position:** sideline, central
- **Rotation method:** none required at this scale
- **Direction of play:** both directions, one goal per end

Practice walkthrough: A 7v7 game in which every goal must follow a player receiving and turning between the opposition's lines at some point in the build-up. The coach notes, without necessarily announcing, how often the team creates and uses this picture naturally.

Rules: Goals not following a between-the-lines reception and turn do not count; otherwise standard small-sided-game rules.

Tactical roles: the full receiving, turning and pocket-recognition skill set from Practices 2–3, applied inside free-flowing, competitive play.

Decision-making triggers: the full set from Practice 3, applied spontaneously as pockets arise during play.

Communication language used: the full season's language so far.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean receiving and turning technique under competitive, game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly identifying and using open pockets as they arise naturally.
Physical	Moderate, game-based intensity to close the week on a positive note.
Psychological	Confidence and enjoyment — this is the week's designed high point.
Communication & leadership	Team-mates calling out an open pocket for a player about to receive.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best between-the-lines moment work?
2. What's one thing from this week you feel ready to take into Saturday?
3. Why does a central receiver turning under less pressure matter for the team as a whole, not just for that one player?

Progressions:

1. Increase the value of a goal that follows a turn completed in one touch.

2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase the frequency of central pocket opportunities.

Regressions:

1. Allow goals from any source if the condition is proving too restrictive for the group's current confidence.
2. Increase the pitch size for more space and time.
3. Reduce to 5v5 for more individual involvement.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Team forces the ball into a pocket even when the condition is making it artificial	The condition is chased rather than played naturally	Passes into crowded pockets result in repeated turnovers	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that pocket really open?"	Resume
Team avoids central areas altogether, playing exclusively around the outside	Caution after being taught the risk of losing the ball centrally	No attempts at all to use the central pocket	Stop	Short group intervention: "we need to trust this again — that's what tonight is for"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: light touch — mostly *questioning*, preserving the game's flow and enjoyment as the session's intended closing note.

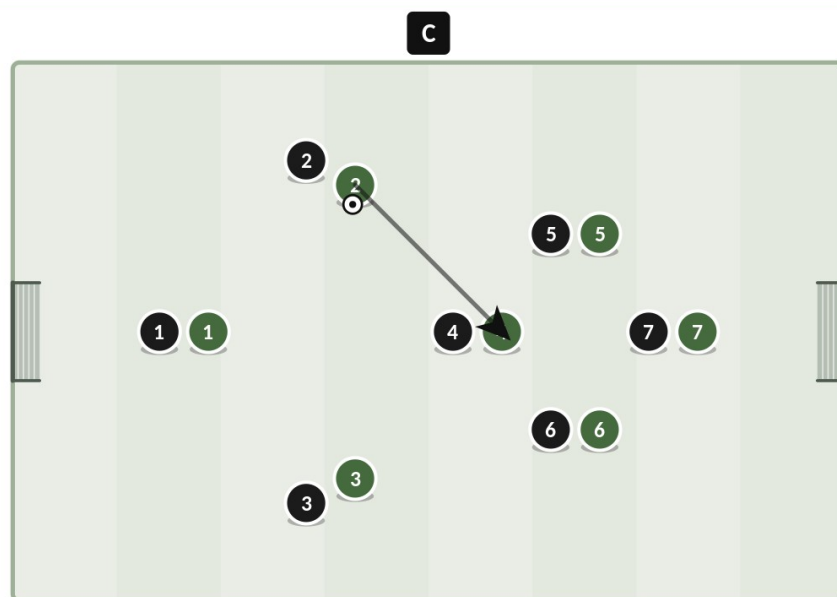
Success indicators:

- Goals following a genuine between-the-lines reception and turn increase across the practice.
- The central pocket is used as readily as the wider ones by the end of the practice.
- Players finish the session animated and positive.

Coach's eye: this is a confidence-building close to the week — resist over-coaching it; let the week's earlier correction do its work and allow the group to enjoy what they've built.

H12.4 POCKET MONEY — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • every goal must follow a player receiving and turning between the lines • 17 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 34x22 metre pitch with a full-size 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. White football near a green player. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass into a green player positioned between two black players. Title: 'POCKET MONEY — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v7 • every goal must follow a player receiving and turning between the lines • 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, a green-bibbed player receiving between two black-bibbed opponents and turning with visible confidence, team-mates arriving in support, both full-size goals visible, coach on the touchline smiling and encouraging.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 7v7 small-sided football game on a grass pitch with two full-size goals. A player in a dark green bib receiving the ball between two opponents in black bibs and turning with visible confidence. Team-mates in matching dark green bibs arriving in support. Warm early-evening light, realistic grass pitch and long shadows, amateur adult players of varied build showing visible energy and enjoyment. A coach on the touchline, smiling and encouraging. 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: "Name one player who received and turned between the lines tonight, and what made it work."

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Keep the back line and first midfield line genuinely connected under pressure throughout the match.
2. Find and use a central receiver between the opposition's lines at least once in open play.
3. Recognise which of the pitch's available pockets is genuinely open before forcing a pass into one.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** maintain a functional, usable distance to the first midfield line at all times.
2. **Midfield unit:** offer genuine, receivable angles inside the pockets, and recognise which pocket the picture is actually offering.
3. **Front players:** support central receivers quickly once they've turned, converting the picture into an attacking outcome.

Individual role reminders:

- Every central receiver should check their shoulder before the ball arrives, every time.
- A lay-off is a legitimate, sometimes better outcome than a forced turn — read the picture honestly.
- The back line should call for the midfield line to adjust its distance rather than accepting a poor connection silently.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Number of successful receptions and turns completed by a central player between the opposition's lines.
- Time the back line and first midfield line spend at a functional, connected distance versus disconnected.
- Number of clean chances created directly from a between-the-lines combination.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Shapes

Unit relationships — back line and first midfield line:

STRUCTURE	WHO FORMS THE TWO LINES	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	WHAT CHANGES	KEY RISK
4-3-3	Back four and the central midfielder trio	The connection distance and passing-lane principle	The specific players providing the connecting angle depends on which midfielder drops	The holding midfielder splitting the centre-backs too often, over-thinning the connection
3-4-3 / back-three structure	Back three and the double pivot	The connection distance and passing-lane principle	A back three often needs one fewer connecting body, freeing a wing-back to push higher	Both pivot players occupying the same central pocket, removing width from the connection

Playing between the lines:

STRUCTURE	WHO MOST OFTEN PLAYS BETWEEN THE LINES	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	WHAT CHANGES	KEY RISK
4-3-3	A number 10 or a withdrawn striker	The scan-and-turn technique and the three-pocket recognition principle	The central striker may drop deep more often, changing who leads the front line	The withdrawn player and a central midfielder occupying the same pocket simultaneously
3-4-3	Either forward dropping short, or an advanced pivot player	The scan-and-turn technique and the three-pocket recognition principle	Two forwards create a natural rotation for who drops into the pocket	Both forwards dropping simultaneously, leaving no genuine depth threat

Coach Review

To be completed by the coaching staff after delivery.

What worked well this week:

What needs more work:

Attendance and availability notes:

Adjustments for next week:

Individual player notes:

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