



Week 15 — Developing Collective Understanding

Tags: `defending` `compactness` `pressing` `full-squad-practice` `conditioning`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	15 of 36
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Core principle	Compactness — vertical and horizontal
Secondary principle	Pressure, cover, balance
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Weeks 3 and 7 taught compactness and a mid-block as static structures, and Week 8 taught the team to press collectively off a shared trigger. What's still missing is the block's ability to move — to shift as one connected unit as the ball changes sides, and to adapt its pressing picture specifically to the shape the opposition is building from. This week gives the block its first genuine mobility, then applies it to a named opposition structure.
Formation-neutral explanation	A defensive block shifting as a unit is not tied to any specific formation — whatever the underlying shape, the block's players move the same distance, in the same direction, at the same time, so the connections between them (established in Week 12) never tear. Equally, pressing a back four is a picture, not a formation requirement — any pressing team, in any shape, can be coached to recognise and press this specific opponent structure.
Example structural applications	In a 4-3-3 out of possession: the back four and the midfield three shift together laterally as the ball moves, with the front three adjusting their pressing angles to keep cutting the same passing lanes regardless of which side the ball is on. In a 4-1-4-1 or back-three defensive structure: the shift looks slightly different in shape but follows the identical rule — every player moves together, the same distance, at the same time — and the same reading of a back-four build-up (which centre-back has more time, where the holding midfielder can drop) applies regardless of the presser's own defensive shape.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, look for moments where the block was stretched by a switch of play even though the result was good — a strong performance can still hide a block that shifts too slowly. Name it plainly.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team was repeatedly split open by switches of play, or struggled to press an opponent building from the back cleanly, this week answers it directly — open the relevant session with the specific moment from the match.

Route C — Attendance, facilities or player availability are disrupted. Both mechanisms — shifting as a block, and pressing a back-four shape — scale to any numbers. Protect the "move together" discipline above pure player counts; a smaller block that shifts as one unit teaches the same lesson as a full one.

Tuesday — Session 29

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	29 of 72
Week	15
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Defensive shifting as a block
Short summary	Teaches the defensive block to move as one connected unit as the ball changes sides, so the compactness and connection principles from Weeks 3, 7 and 12 survive a switch of play rather than being torn apart by it.
Tags	`defending` `compactness` `conditioning`
Primary learning objective	The defensive block shifts the same distance, in the same direction, at the same time, in response to the ball moving.
Secondary learning objective	The block recognises a switch of play as a specific trigger requiring an immediate, collective shift, not a gradual drift.
Match connection	This week's foundation for the match-day connection named for Thursday: the block shifts as one unit, not in parts.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer moments where the block is caught split or stretched after the opposition switches the point of attack.
Expected physical load	Change of direction volume, high — repeated lateral shifting rather than sustained running.
Recommended intensity	7–8 / 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 shifting block, calling the shift as clearly as any outfield player.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A positional shifting grid for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 reduces to a 4-player block; Practice 3 becomes 5v5; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Compress the shifting distance rather than removing the shift itself — the block moving together is the entire teaching point.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

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

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>The Shifting Wall</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Shift to Win</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Hold the Line</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — SHIFT AND SHAPE (ARRIVAL)

Duration: 10 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate-high

Tactical purpose: Introduces the physical sensation of a connected group shifting laterally together, before any tactical structure is added.

Organisation: 24 x 18 m grid, a line of players facing the coach. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully.

Walkthrough: A line of players shuffles laterally together on the coach's call, maintaining even spacing throughout — a direct physical rehearsal of the block shifting principle, with no ball involved yet.

Rules: Spacing between players must stay even throughout every shift.

Coaching points:

- *Physical:* explosive, repeated lateral movement.
- *Psychological:* awareness of the players on either side, not just the coach's call.

PRACTICE 2 — THE SHIFTING WALL (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the mechanics of a defensive block shifting laterally as the ball moves from side to side, so the team feels directly what happens when the shift is collective and immediate versus gradual and staggered.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 26 m
- **Players:** 6 defending outfield vs 6 opposition players working the ball around the outside
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through the defending block
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 6
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the block's reference positions
- **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 block
- **Rotation method:** groups swap every few minutes
- **Direction of play:** the opposition works the ball around the outside; the block shifts to stay compact against it

Practice walkthrough: Six opposition players move the ball around the outside of a rectangular area while six defending players hold a compact block inside it, shifting laterally as one connected unit each time the ball moves from one side to the other. The defending block's task is purely to stay compact and connected — this practice has no ball-winning objective, deliberately isolating the movement itself.

Rules: The block must maintain even spacing throughout every shift; a player moving independently of the rest of the block is an immediate stoppage.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* each block player must move at the same time as their neighbours, not before or after.
- *Unit:* the whole block functions as one connected shape, echoing Week 12's connected-lines work.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice isolates the defensive shift specifically.

Decision-making triggers:

- The ball moves to a new side → the block shifts together, immediately.
- The ball is static or moving within the same side → the block holds its current position.

Communication language used: *Squeeze, Cover, Step.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Even spacing maintained throughout every shift.
Tactical	Immediate, collective reaction to the ball changing sides.
Physical	Repeated, explosive lateral movement.
Psychological	Discipline to move only when the trigger (the ball changing sides) genuinely occurs.
Communication & leadership	A single voice (often the goalkeeper or a central defender) calling the shift for the whole block.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What happened to the block's shape when one player shifted before the rest?
2. How quickly did the block need to react once the ball changed sides?
3. Why does even spacing matter as much as the shift itself?
4. How does this connect to Week 12's connected-lines work — is this a moving version of the same idea?

Progressions:

1. Increase the speed at which the opposition moves the ball around the outside.
2. Add a genuine central presser once the shift is consistently well-timed.
3. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the precision required.

Regressions:

1. Slow the ball movement around the outside while the shift is being learned.
2. Widen the practice area for more time to react.
3. Reduce to a 4-player block.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
One or two players shift while others lag behind	The trigger is recognised individually rather than as a shared cue	The block's shape visibly stretches or tears during the shift	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and rehearse the shift together	Resume
The block shifts too far, over-committing to one side	Overcorrection, or misjudging the required distance	The block becomes narrow on one side and exposed on the other	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: demonstrate the correct shifting distance	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since precise, collective timing is the entire teaching point.

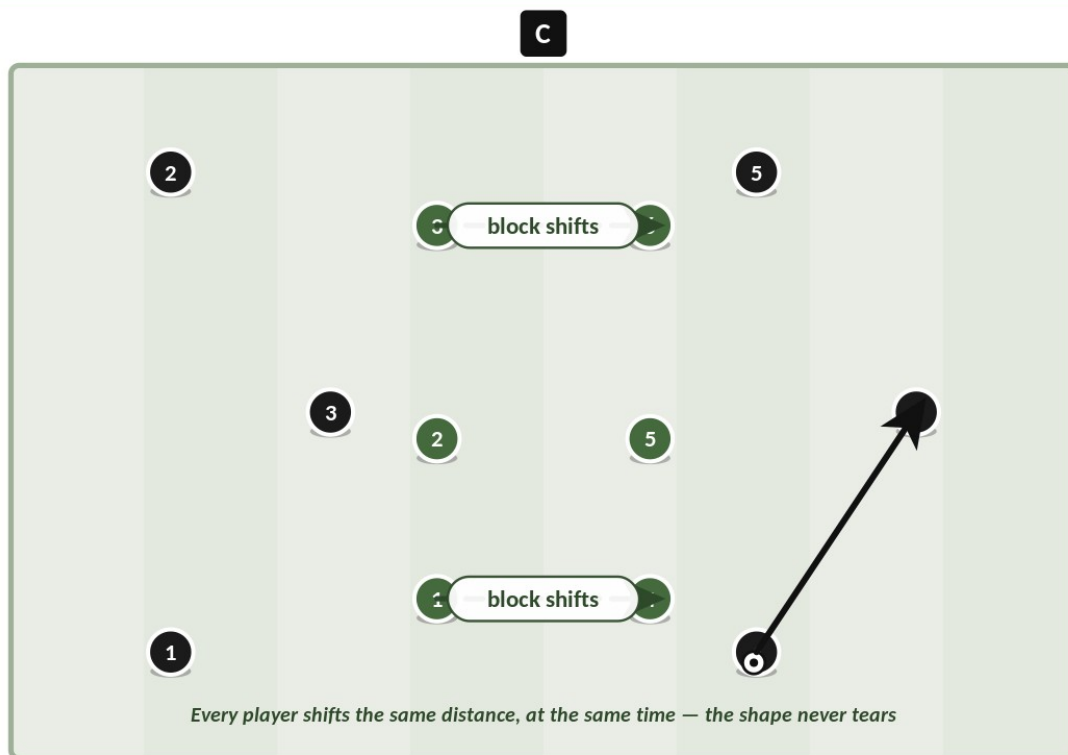
Success indicators:

- The block shifts together, at the same time, every repetition.
- Even spacing is maintained throughout.
- A single, clear voice organises each shift.

Coach's eye: watch the far side of the block from the ball, not the near side — a block that has genuinely learned to shift will show it in how quickly the far side closes down space, not just how the near side reacts to the ball.

T15.2 THE SHIFTING WALL — Moving as One Block

40 x 26 m • 6 defenders shift together as the ball moves side to side • 15 minutes



● Defending block ● Possession team ● Ball ➔ Block shift

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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 area with dimension labels. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6 arranged in two compact rows inside the area. Six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread around the outside. White football near a black player at the top. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass across the top. Two short dashed run arrows labelled 'block shifts' showing green players moving laterally together. Title: 'THE SHIFTING WALL — Moving as One Block'. Subtitle: '40 x 26 m • 6 defenders shift together as the ball moves side to side • 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 area showing a compact block of green-bibbed players shifting laterally together as black-bibbed opponents move the ball around the outside, even spacing clearly visible across the block, coach centrally positioned observing the collective movement.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. A compact group of players in dark green bibs shifting laterally together as players in black bibs move a ball around the outside of the area. Even, consistent spacing clearly visible across the green-bibbed group as they move. A coach standing centrally, observing the collective movement closely. 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 — SHIFT TO WIN (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the shifting principle into a genuine small-sided game, rewarding a regain won quickly after the opposition switches the point of attack, connecting Tuesday's technical work to a real defensive 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 regain won within three seconds of the opposition switching the point of attack is worth double. The coach notes, without necessarily announcing, how quickly and how collectively the defending team's block shifts to the new side.

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

Tactical roles: the full block-shifting skill set from Practice 2, now inside live, directional play with a genuine defensive consequence.

Decision-making triggers: as established in Practice 2, plus the live recognition of a genuine switch of play (echoing Week 9's switching principle from the attacking side).

Communication language used: *Squeeze, Cover, Step, Switch.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean, quick defensive actions immediately after the shift.
Tactical	Recognising a genuine switch as the trigger for a collective shift.
Physical	Repeated high-intensity lateral actions.
Psychological	Confidence to commit to the shift rather than hesitating.
Communication & leadership	Calling the switch and the shift together, in the same moment.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was your team's clearest example of a fast, collective shift after a switch tonight?
2. How did it feel different from Week 9, when your team was the one doing the switching?
3. What happened when the block's shift was slow or staggered?
4. How does this connect to Week 8's collective pressing triggers — is a switch of play a similar kind of shared cue?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the three-second bonus window, sharpening urgency.

2. Add a condition rewarding a regain that leads directly to a shot.
3. Reduce the practice area, increasing the frequency of switches.

Regressions:

1. Extend the bonus window to five seconds.
2. Widen the practice area for more time to react.
3. Reduce to 4v4 for more individual involvement.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The block shifts too slowly, missing the bonus window	Old, gradual-drift habits reassert themselves under game pressure	The opposition exploits the new side before the block has fully shifted	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to Practice 2's technique	Resume
The block over-commits to the new side, leaving the original side exposed to a second switch	Overcorrection toward urgency	A second, quick switch back exploits an over-committed block	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did we leave anything exposed on the side we just left?"	Resume

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

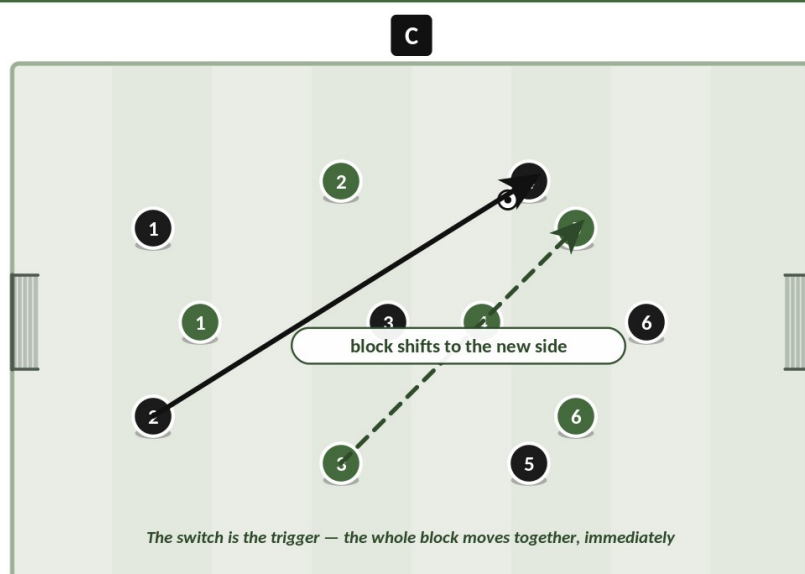
Success indicators:

- Bonus-condition regains increase across the practice.
- The block's shift is visibly faster and more collective than in Practice 2.
- The team avoids over-committing to one side at the expense of a second switch.

Coach's eye: watch the timing between the switch pass being played and the block's first collective movement — the gap between the two should shrink visibly across the practice.

T15.3 SHIFT TO WIN — Small-Sided Game

34 x 22 m • 6v6 • a regain won within 3 seconds of the ball being switched is worth double • 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Team in possession ○ Ball ➔ Switch pass ➔ Block shifts to the new side

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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, clustered toward the left. A long black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a switch pass travelling to the right. Two short dashed run arrows labelled 'block shifts to the new side' showing green players moving to the right. Title: 'SHIFT TO WIN — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 6v6 · a regain won within 3 seconds of the ball being switched 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 black-bibbed player striking a long switch pass across the pitch, green-bibbed defenders visibly shifting together toward the new side as the ball travels, both mini goals visible, coach on the touchline tracking the reaction time 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 black bib striking a long switch pass across the pitch. Players in dark green bibs visibly shifting together toward the new side as the ball travels through the air. Late-afternoon light, realistic grass pitch and shadows, amateur adult players of varied build. A coach on the touchline, tracking the reaction time closely. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 4 — HOLD THE LINE (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, requiring the defending team's block to shift as one connected unit against a possession team deliberately instructed to switch the point of attack repeatedly, the picture most likely to expose a block that hasn't genuinely learned to move together.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the defending team's goalkeeper is coached specifically as part of the shifting block

- **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 possession team is specifically coached to look for and use repeated switches of play, while the defending team is coached to shift as one connected unit each time, maintaining compactness throughout. The coach notes, without necessarily stopping play, how quickly and how collectively the block responds to each switch.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules.

Tactical roles: the full block-shifting skill set, combined for the first time with a genuinely reactive, switching 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 collective shifting in response to repeated switches.
Physical	The week's peak physical demand — repeated, explosive lateral actions.
Psychological	Composure and discipline to shift together rather than individually reacting to the ball.
Communication & leadership	The block organising its shift out loud, every time, without hesitation.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of a well-timed, collective shift tonight?
2. When did the block get caught split or stretched, and what caused it?
3. How does this connect to Week 9's switching-the-point-of-attack principle — you're now defending against the very picture your own team learned to create?

4. What is the relationship between this week's compactness work and Week 8's collective pressing triggers?

Progressions:

1. Instruct the possession team to switch even more frequently, raising the demand on the block.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

1. Instruct the possession team to switch less frequently while the shifting skill is being consolidated.
2. Reduce to 6v6 on a smaller area.
3. Reintroduce Practice 2's isolated shifting drilling briefly if the block has broken down under full match conditions.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The block shifts too slowly under full match pressure and fatigue	Habitual patterns reassert themselves against a real, moving opponent	The opposition exploits the far side before the block has fully reorganised	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The block shifts collectively but too far, over-committing	The urgency taught in Practice 3 becomes overcorrection under match fatigue	A second switch back exploits an over-committed block	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did we leave anything exposed there?"	Resume

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

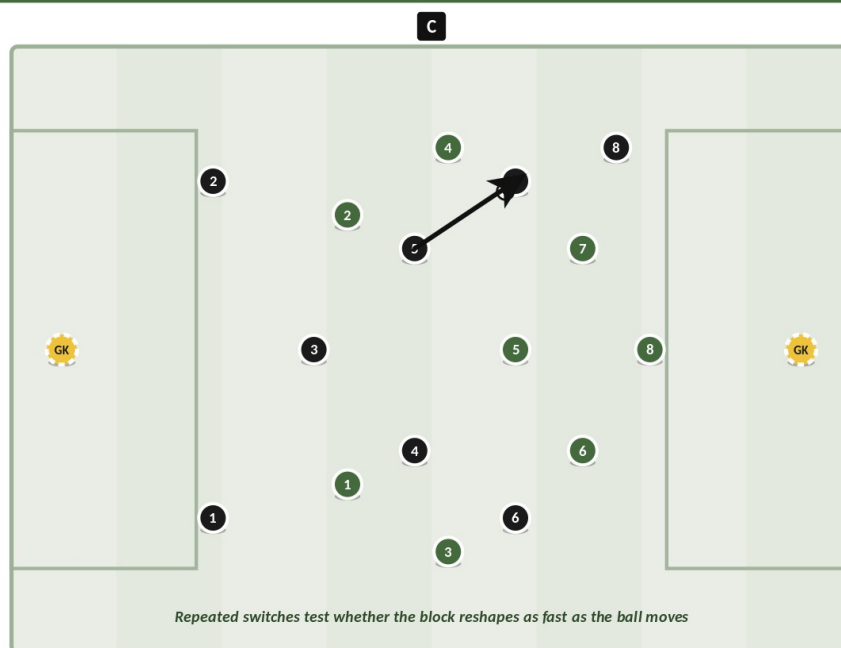
Success indicators:

- The block shifts collectively and at pace, in response to every genuine switch.
- The block avoids over-committing to one side at the expense of a subsequent switch.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, when and why the shift held or broke down.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of whether Tuesday's teaching has transferred — judge it specifically against how quickly the whole block, not just the nearest player, reacts to a switch.

T15.4 HOLD THE LINE — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • the block shifts as one unit against repeated switches of play • 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Possession team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ➔ Switch pass

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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. A long black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a switch pass. White football near a black player. Title: 'HOLD THE LINE — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • the block shifts as one unit against repeated switches of play • 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 compact block of green-bibbed defenders visibly shifting together across the pitch as a black-bibbed opponent switches the point of attack, 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 compact block of players in dark green bibs visibly shifting together across the pitch as an opponent in a black bib switches the point of attack with a long pass. 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 block shifted together, as one unit, after a switch of play."

Thursday — Session 30

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	30 of 72
Week	15
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Pressing a back four
Short summary	Applies the season's pressing principles (Weeks 3 and 8) to a specifically named opposition structure — a back four building from the goalkeeper — teaching the team to cut passing angles with cover shadows and press together off cues specific to this picture.
Tags	`pressing` `defending` `unit-work`
Primary learning objective	The team presses a back-four build-up with correct angles, cutting the nearest passing lane while pressuring the ball.
Secondary learning objective	The team maintains cover for a switch even while pressing, connecting directly to Tuesday's shifting work.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: the block shifts as one unit, not in parts — now specifically applied to the pressing picture as well as the defending picture.
Expected tactical outcome	More regains won higher up the pitch specifically against a back-four build-up, with fewer occasions where the press is beaten by a simple switch.
Expected physical load	Change of direction volume, high — similar demand to Tuesday, focused on pressing angles rather than lateral block shifts.
Recommended intensity	7–8 / 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; the pressing team's front players are coached specifically on cutting the goalkeeper's easiest passing options.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 34 m (Practice 3).
Area layout	A 1v1 angle-work area 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 a 6-player back-four-plus-two build-up vs 6 pressers.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 3 can extend to a fuller 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Practice 2 works in any space with two cones marking the passing lane; Practice 3 needs realistic width and should not be excessively compressed.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Curve the Run</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Cut the Angle</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Press the Four</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>High and Tight</i>	Black
0:59–1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — CURVE THE RUN (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the physical shape of a curved pressing run — one that blocks a passing lane on its way to the ball — before any tactical structure is added.

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

Walkthrough: One player passes to a second while a "presser" runs a curved path that arrives at the ball-carrier while simultaneously blocking the passing lane to the second player, rehearsing the shape of the run in isolation.

Rules: The curved run must genuinely block the passing lane, not just arrive at the ball-carrier in a straight line.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* body shape and angle of approach.
- *Physical:* explosive, curved running actions.
- *Psychological:* thinking about the pass being blocked, not just the ball being won.

PRACTICE 2 — CUT THE ANGLE (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific technique of a pressing run that uses a cover shadow — the presser's body position blocking a passing lane as they approach — so the team's pressing is intelligent and angled rather than simply fast and direct.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 30 x 20 m
- **Players:** 1 presser vs 2 passers, rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as one of the two passers
- **Team sizes:** 1 v 2
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the two passers' positions
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach restarts on any stoppage
- **Coach position:** able to see the presser's angle of approach clearly
- **Rotation method:** presser rotates every few repetitions
- **Direction of play:** not applicable — a technical, angle-focused practice

Practice walkthrough: Two passers stand a set distance apart, simulating two centre-backs in a back-four build-up. A single presser must approach the ball-carrying passer along a curved path that simultaneously blocks the passing lane to the second passer, so the ball-carrier's only realistic options are backward or into a covered lane.

Rules: A straight-line approach that leaves the second passer's lane open counts as a failed repetition, even if the ball-carrier is pressured.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the presser's curved running line and body shape is the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is defending-technique-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- The ball-carrier has two realistic passing options → curve the run to block the more dangerous one.
- The ball-carrier has already been cut off from the dangerous option → close down directly.

Communication language used: *Inside/Outside, Cover.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Curved running technique and body shape on approach.
Tactical	Reading which passing lane is more dangerous and blocking it specifically.
Physical	Explosive, curved sprinting actions.
Psychological	Thinking about the pass being denied, not just the ball being chased.
Communication & leadership	Calling "Inside" or "Outside" to direct a covering team-mate on which side the ball-carrier is being forced toward.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the presser's curved run actually achieve that a straight-line approach wouldn't have?
2. How did the ball-carrier's options change once the dangerous lane was blocked?
3. Why might a presser sometimes choose to block the less obvious passing lane rather than the nearest one?
4. How does this connect to Week 8's collective pressing triggers — is angle-of-approach part of what makes a press effective, not just timing?

Progressions:

1. Add a third passer, requiring the presser to judge which of two lanes is more dangerous.
2. Reduce the distance between the two passers, sharpening the angle required.
3. Add a genuine time pressure — the presser must arrive and cut the angle within a set number of seconds.

Regressions:

1. Increase the distance between the two passers for more time to read the angle.
2. Allow the coach to call out which lane is more dangerous while the technique is being learned.
3. Reduce to a single passer with no second option, focusing purely on the curved running technique.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Presser approaches in a straight line, leaving the dangerous lane open	Habit of chasing the ball directly rather than reading the picture	The ball-carrier can still access the second passer easily	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: demonstrate the curved approach again	Resume
Presser blocks the wrong lane	Misreading which option is genuinely more dangerous	The ball-carrier uses the lane the presser left open	Stop	Short group intervention: "which lane was actually more dangerous there?"	Resume

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

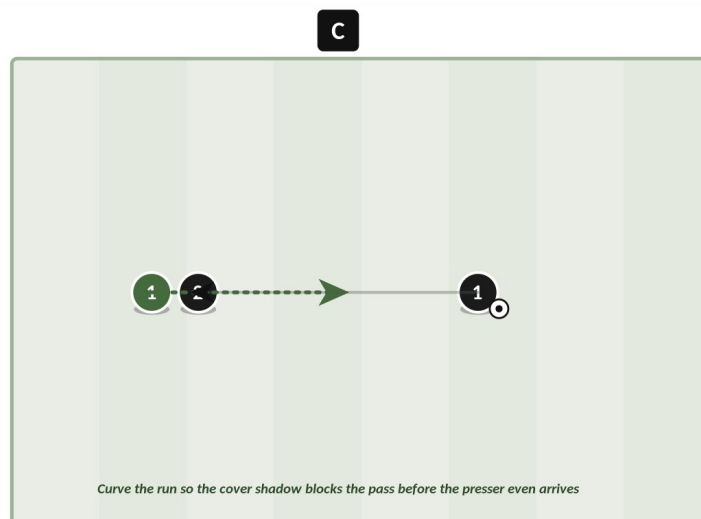
Success indicators:

- The presser's run consistently blocks the more dangerous passing lane.
- The ball-carrier is left with only backward or covered options.
- The correct lane is chosen even when it isn't the most obvious one.

Coach's eye: watch the presser's shoulders and hips, not just their feet — the curve of the run is set by body shape well before the final approach to the ball.

H15.2 CUT THE ANGLE — Pressing With a Cover Shadow

30 x 20 m • 1v1 pressing angle work vs a back-four passer • the presser's body blocks the pass, not just the ball • 15 minutes



● Presser ● Back-four passer ● Ball • • • Curved pressing run ➔ Blocked passing lane

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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 area with dimension labels. Two players in black bibs numbered 1-2 positioned a set distance apart, one holding a football. One player in dark green bibs numbered 1 on the far side. A short dotted red press arrow with a chevron arrowhead showing a curved pressing run from the green player toward the ball-carrying black player, passing between the two black players to block the lane. A faded grey dashed line showing the blocked passing lane. Title: 'CUT THE ANGLE — Pressing With a Cover Shadow'. Subtitle: '30 x 20 m • 1v1 pressing angle work vs a back-four passer • the presser's body blocks the pass, not just the ball • 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 area, a green-bibbed presser running a visibly curved path toward a black-bibbed ball-carrier, their body angled to block the passing lane to a second black-bibbed player standing nearby, coach observing the shape of the run 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 running a visibly curved path toward a player in a black bib in possession of the ball, their body angled to simultaneously block the passing lane to a second player in a black bib standing nearby. A coach standing to the side, closely observing the shape and angle of the run. 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 — PRESS THE FOUR (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the individual pressing-angle work into a full positional practice against a genuine back-four-plus-goalkeeper build-up, teaching the team to press collectively while always leaving cover for a switch of play, directly connecting Tuesday's shifting principle to this specific pressing picture.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 building outfield + goalkeeper (in a back four plus midfield support)

vs 8 pressing

- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the building team's goalkeeper participates fully in the build-up, the pressing team's front players read and press their options

- **Team sizes:** 8 + GK v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions
- **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 the whole picture
- **Rotation method:** roles swap at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** the building team works to progress; the pressing team works to regain

Practice walkthrough: The building team organises specifically in a back-four structure with goalkeeper involvement, exactly the picture this practice is named for. The pressing team applies the curved-run, cover-shadow technique from Practice 2 at team scale, cutting the nearest passing lanes while always leaving at least one player shaped to cover a switch of play, directly applying Tuesday's shifting principle to the pressing picture.

Rules: Standard positional practice rules; a regain scores a point for the pressing team, a set number of consecutive passes scores a point for the building team.

Tactical roles: the full pressing-angle skill set from Practice 2, combined with Tuesday's block-shifting and cover-for-the-switch principles.

Decision-making triggers:

- A back-four passer has two realistic options → the nearest presser curves their run to block the more dangerous one.
- The building team looks likely to switch → the pressing team's balance player (Season Architecture role) shifts early to cover it.

Communication language used: *Inside/Outside, Cover, Step, Squeeze.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Curved pressing runs applied at team scale, under a genuine, moving picture.
Tactical	Balancing aggressive pressing with cover for the switch, simultaneously.
Physical	Repeated, explosive pressing actions combined with lateral cover movement.
Psychological	Composure to press with genuine intent while trusting a team-mate to cover the switch.
Communication & leadership	The pressing team organising who presses and who covers, out loud, continuously.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made a pressing action against the back four successful — was it the angle, the timing, or the cover behind it?
2. How did the pressing team avoid being caught out by a switch while pressing aggressively?
3. What did the back four do differently once they recognised the press was well-organised?
4. How does this connect to Week 8's collective pressing triggers — is this the same shared-cue idea applied to a specific opponent shape?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine attacking direction and target zone for the pressing team once a regain is won.
2. Instruct the building team to use a double pivot, adding a passing option the pressing team must also account for.
3. Reduce the practice area, raising the intensity of both the press and the cover requirement.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the building team to a back three temporarily, simplifying the pressing picture.
2. Widen the practice area for more time.
3. Allow the coach to call out which passer to press first while the picture is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The press is aggressive but leaves no cover for the switch	Attention fixed entirely on the ball-near pressing action	A switch of play immediately beats the whole pressing structure	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to Tuesday's shifting principle	Resume
The press is cautious and passive, never actually pressuring the back four	Overcorrection toward caution after being taught to cover the switch	The building team is never genuinely pressured, retaining possession easily	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "were we pressing with real intent there?"	Resume

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

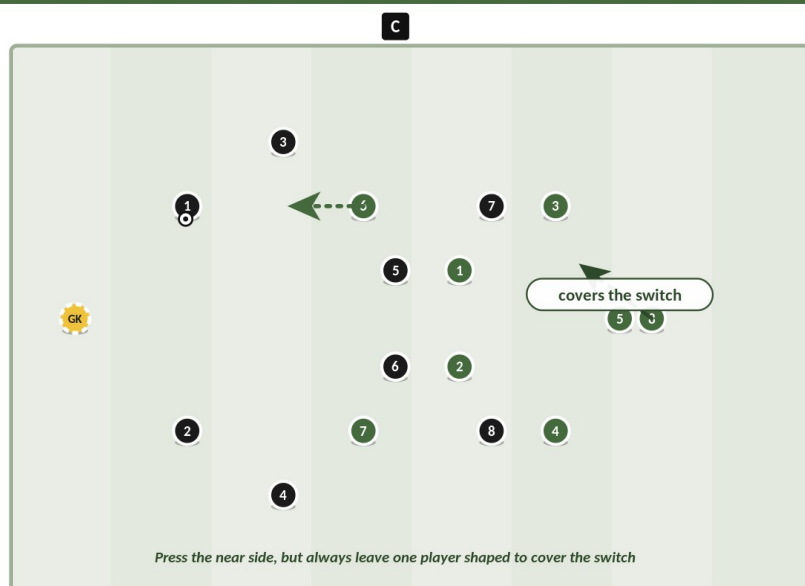
Success indicators:

- The pressing team genuinely pressures the back four's passing options.
- At least one player is always shaped to cover a switch, even while others press.
- Regains increase across the practice without leaving the team exposed to a switch.

Coach's eye: watch the balance player (the one furthest from the ball) as closely as the presser — a well-organised press is judged as much by what the covering players are doing as by the pressure on the ball itself.

H15.3 PRESS THE FOUR — Pressing a Back-Four Build-Up

50 x 34 m • 8+GK building in a back four vs 8 pressing • cut the angles, trigger together, cover the switch • 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 50x34 metre area with dimension labels. A goalkeeper in yellow on the left. Eight players in blue bibs numbered 1–8 organised in a back-four build-up shape with midfield support, and eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 pressing them. A short dotted red press arrow with a chevron arrowhead showing a curved pressing run. A green dashed arrow labelled 'covers the switch' showing a green player positioned to cover the far side. Title: 'PRESS THE FOUR — Pressing a Back-Four Build-Up'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m • 8+GK building in a back four vs 8 pressing • cut the angles, trigger together, cover the switch • 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 positional practice, a back-four-shaped group in blue bibs playing out from their goalkeeper, green-bibbed pressers curving their runs to cut passing angles, one green-bibbed player clearly positioned deeper and wider, shaped to cover a potential switch, coach observing from a central, elevated 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. A group of players in blue bibs organised in a back-four shape, playing out from their goalkeeper. Players in dark green bibs curving their running lines to cut off passing angles. One player in a dark green bib positioned noticeably deeper and wider than the others, clearly shaped to cover a potential switch of play. A coach observing from a central vantage point. 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 — HIGH AND TIGHT (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards regains won high up the pitch, reinforcing the week's pressing 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 a regain won inside the opposition's half is worth double, encouraging committed, well-organised pressing throughout.

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

Tactical roles: the full pressing-angle and cover-for-the-switch skill set from Practices 2–3, applied inside free-flowing, competitive play.

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

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Curved pressing runs and cover-shadow technique under game-realistic, competitive conditions.
Tactical	Correctly identifying and exploiting pressing opportunities as they arise naturally.
Physical	Moderate-high, 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	Organising the press and its cover quickly, without needing a stoppage to reset.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best high regain work?
2. What's one thing from this week — shifting as a block, or pressing the back four — you feel ready to take into Saturday?
3. Why does cover for the switch matter even during a game designed to reward aggressive pressing?

Progressions:

1. Increase the bonus value for a regain that leads directly to a shot within five seconds.
2. Add a genuine offside line.

3. Reduce the pitch size slightly to increase pressing frequency.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the bonus zone to just the final third if the condition is proving too difficult.
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
Players press individually, chasing the high-regain bonus without cover	The bonus condition is chased at the expense of the structure taught earlier in the week	Presses happen with no covering player, leaving the team exposed to a switch	Stop	Short group intervention connecting back to Practice 3	Resume
Team becomes too cautious, abandoning the high press to avoid being exposed	Overcorrection after an earlier correction	Few or no pressing attempts in the opposition half	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was there a press on there that we didn't take?"	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.

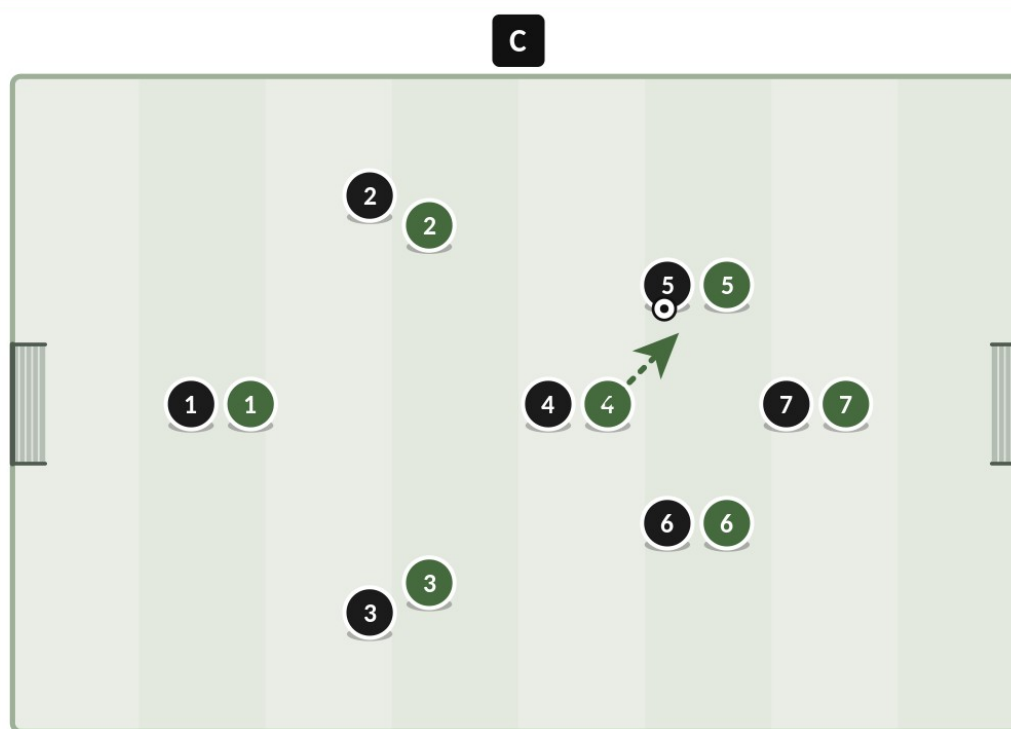
Success indicators:

- High regains increase across the practice.
- Presses remain organised, with cover maintained even as urgency increases.
- 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.

H15.4 HIGH AND TIGHT — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • a regain won in the opposition half is worth double • 17 minutes



● Team A ● Team B ● Ball ➡ High press

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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 black player. A short dotted red press arrow with a chevron arrowhead showing a green player pressing in the opposition half. Title: 'HIGH AND TIGHT — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v7 • a regain won in the opposition half is worth double • 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 winning the ball high up the pitch with a well-timed, organised press, team-mates reacting quickly to the regain, 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 winning the ball high up the pitch with a well-timed, organised press. Team-mates in matching dark green bibs reacting quickly to the regain. 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 press tonight that had genuine cover behind it, and one that didn't."

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Shift the defensive block as one connected unit every time the opposition switches the point of attack.
2. Press the opposition's back-four build-up using curved runs that cut the most dangerous passing lane.
3. Always leave at least one player shaped to cover a switch, even while pressing aggressively.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** organise and call the block's shift, every time, without hesitation.
2. **Midfield unit:** maintain the connected-lines relationship from Week 12 throughout every shift.
3. **Front players:** curve pressing runs to block the opposition's most dangerous passing option, not just chase the ball.

Individual role reminders:

- Move with the block, not before or after it — even spacing is as important as speed.
- When pressing, think about the pass you're blocking, not just the ball you're chasing.
- If you're the balance player, your job is to be ready for the switch before it happens, not after.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Time taken for the block to fully shift after an opposition switch of play (aim: a visible reduction from previous weeks).
- Number of regains won specifically against a back-four build-up.
- Number of occasions the press was beaten by an immediate switch versus successfully covered.
- Number of regains won inside the opposition's half.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Shapes

Defensive shifting as a block:

STRUCTURE	WHO FORMS THE SHIFTING BLOCK	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	WHAT CHANGES	KEY RISK
4-3-3	The back four and midfield three shifting together	The "same distance, same time" shifting principle	The front three's pressing angles adjust based on which side the ball is on	The front three failing to adjust their angle, leaving the shifted block's pressing picture incomplete
4-1-4-1 / back-three defensive structure	The back three (or back five, when wing-backs drop) shifting together	The "same distance, same time" shifting principle	A back three or five often has a naturally different shifting distance than a back four	Wing-backs shifting at a different speed than the back three, tearing the connection

Pressing a back four:

STRUCTURE	WHO PRESSES FIRST	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	WHAT CHANGES	KEY RISK
4-3-3	The front three, reading the back four's passing options	The curved-run, cover-shadow technique and the cover-for-the-switch principle	Which of the front three presses first depends on which centre-back has the ball	The front three pressing in a straight line rather than curving to cut the angle
3-4-3 / back-three structure	Both forwards plus a pressing wide midfielder	The curved-run, cover-shadow technique and the cover-for-the-switch principle	A back-three structure often has an extra body to provide cover while two players press	Both forwards pressing the same passer, leaving a second back-four option completely free

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.