



Week 16 — Developing Collective Understanding

Tags: `pressing` `defending` `set-pieces` `full-squad-practice` `conditioning`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	16 of 36
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Core principle	Collective pressing triggers
Secondary principle	Defend the space in behind
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Week 15 taught the team to press a back-four build-up specifically. A back three presents a genuinely different problem: it has a spare man already built in, so the same two-presser picture that worked against a back four leaves a free player against a back three. This week teaches the specific adjustment needed — usually a third presser arriving — and then tests whether the team can recognise which picture it's actually facing and adapt inside the same match, since opponents don't announce their build-up shape in advance.
Formation-neutral explanation	Recognising and adapting to an opponent's build-up shape is a reading skill, not a formation requirement — any pressing team, in any shape of its own, can be coached to count the opposition's build-up numbers and adjust its own pressing numbers to match.
Example structural applications	In a 4-3-3 press: the front three alone are usually enough to press a back four evenly, but pressing a back three typically requires a wide midfielder or full-back to step up and become a temporary third presser. In a 3-4-3 or back-three pressing structure: the front two plus a wide player already provide a natural third pressing body, meaning the adjustment against a back three may require less structural change than a back-four pressing team needs to make. The specific adjustment differs; the requirement to count and match the opponent's build-up numbers does not.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, check specifically whether the press was tested by an opponent building from a back three or a genuinely different shape — a strong performance against a back four doesn't confirm readiness against a back three. Name the gap if it exists.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team was repeatedly played through by a spare build-up player, 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 — counting the opponent's build-up numbers and matching them — scales to any numbers. Protect the counting and adapting principle above pure player counts.

Tuesday — Session 31

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	31 of 72
Week	16
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Pressing a back three / three build-up
Short summary	Teaches the specific adjustment a back-three build-up requires — usually a third presser arriving to remove the spare man — and then tests whether the team can recognise which build-up shape it's facing and adapt inside the same match.
Tags	`pressing` `defending` `conditioning`
Primary learning objective	The team recognises when an opponent is building from a back three and presses with a matching third body, removing the spare player.
Secondary learning objective	The team adapts its pressing picture inside a single match if the opponent changes its build-up shape.
Match connection	This week's foundation for the match-day connection named for Thursday: the press adapts to the opponent's shape inside a half.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer moments where a spare back-three player is left completely free to play through the first press.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high — similar demand to Week 15, focused on recognition and adaptation as much as raw intensity.
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; in Practice 4 the pressing team's goalkeeper is coached on recognising and calling the opponent's build-up shape early.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A tight technical zone for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 reduces to a 2-passer picture; Practice 3 becomes 5v5; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Compress the practice areas proportionally; the counting and adapting principle survives compression well.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Count the Numbers</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Read the Extra Man</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Press the Three</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Adapt the Press</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — COUNT THE NUMBERS (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of quickly counting an opponent's numbers in a picture, before any tactical structure is added.

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

Walkthrough: Small rondo groups of varying sizes (3, 4, or 5) rotate through quickly, and the coach calls "Count" at random intervals, requiring every player to immediately state how many players are in their current group without looking around first — a simple, physical rehearsal of rapid numerical awareness.

Rules: A wrong count means the group repeats the current phase.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* not applicable — this is a cognitive warm-up.
- *Psychological:* rapid, accurate numerical awareness of a live picture.

PRACTICE 2 — READ THE EXTRA MAN (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific problem a back-three build-up creates for a two-presser picture — a spare man — and the specific solution, a third presser arriving to remove it.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 3 build-up players (simulating a back three) vs 2 pressers, with a third presser starting outside the area
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as one of the three build-up players
- **Team sizes:** 3 (building) v 2 (pressing), becoming 3 v 3 once the third presser arrives
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach restarts on any stoppage
- **Coach position:** central, able to see the whole picture
- **Rotation method:** roles rotate every few minutes
- **Direction of play:** the build-up team works to retain and progress

Practice walkthrough: Three build-up players work the ball between themselves against two pressers — an uneven picture with a guaranteed spare man. A third presser starts outside the practice area and must recognise this imbalance and arrive to remove the spare man, converting the picture into a genuine 3v3 that the pressing team can control.

Rules: The third presser may not enter until the coach or a team-mate signals that the spare man has been correctly identified.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the arriving presser's recognition and timing is the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* the two original pressers must correctly identify which of the three build-up players is currently spare.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is defending-technique-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- Three build-up players face only two pressers → a third presser must arrive to remove the spare man.
- The spare man has been correctly identified and pressed → the picture is now even, and the two original pressers can press with the curved-run technique from Week 15.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Curved pressing run technique, applied specifically to remove a spare man.
Tactical	Correctly identifying which of three build-up players is currently spare.
Physical	Explosive arrival runs to close down the spare man.
Psychological	Confidence to commit an extra body forward to press, trusting the picture behind it.
Communication & leadership	The two original pressers calling for the third presser to arrive at the right moment.

Guided discovery questions:

1. How did you identify which of the three build-up players was currently spare?
2. What happened before the third presser arrived, when the picture was genuinely 3v2?
3. Why might the third presser sometimes need to delay their arrival rather than commit immediately?
4. How does this connect to Week 15's back-four pressing work — what's different about this picture specifically?

Progressions:

1. Add a fourth build-up player (simulating a back three plus a dropping midfielder), requiring the pressing team to recognise an even larger picture.
2. Reduce the time allowed before the third presser must arrive.
3. Add a passive fourth presser who can recover to support if the third presser's timing is wrong.

Regressions:

1. Allow the third presser to enter earlier, with more warning.
2. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
3. Reduce the build-up team to two players temporarily, reviewing Week 15's even-picture pressing before reintroducing the spare man.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The third presser doesn't arrive, leaving the spare man permanently free	The two original pressers don't recognise or call for the extra body	The spare man is used repeatedly to retain possession with no pressure	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: identify the spare man together and rehearse the call	Resume
The third presser arrives at the wrong player, leaving a different spare man	Misreading which player is currently spare	The picture remains uneven, just against a different player	Stop	Short group intervention: "who was actually spare there?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since correct identification of the spare man is the entire teaching point.

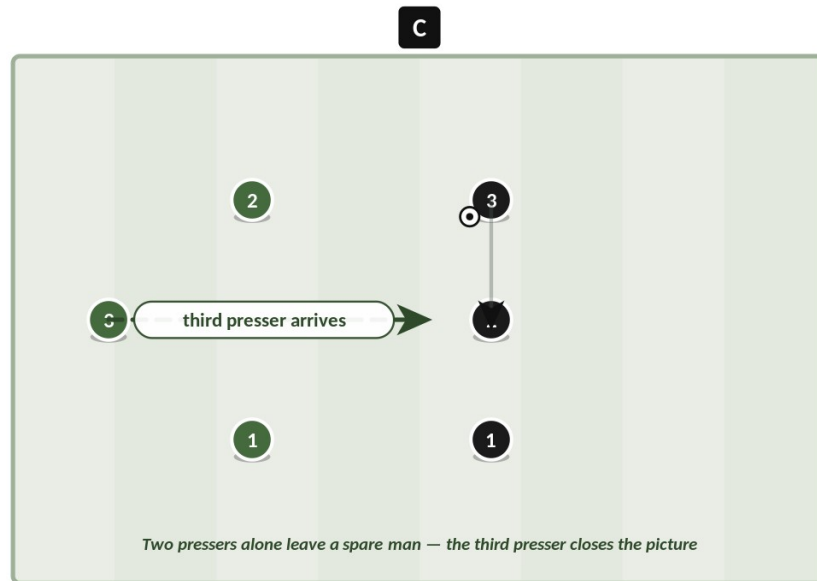
Success indicators:

- The pressing team consistently identifies the spare man correctly.
- The third presser arrives at the right time to remove the spare man.
- Once the third presser arrives, the pressing picture becomes genuinely even.

Coach's eye: watch the build-up team's ball circulation, not just the pressers — a spare man who is being used repeatedly and comfortably is the clearest sign the pressing picture hasn't yet been solved.

T16.2 READ THE EXTRA MAN — Pressing a Back Three

34 x 22 m • 3v2 becomes 3v3 • a third presser must arrive or the spare man plays through • 15 minutes



● Back three (building) ● Pressers ● Ball → Third presser arrives → 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 34x22 metre area with dimension labels. Three players in blue bibs numbered 1-3 arranged in a back-three shape. Two players in dark green bibs numbered 1-2 pressing them, with a third player in dark green bibs numbered 3 outside the area boundary and a short dashed run arrow labelled 'third presser arrives' moving toward the blue players. A faded grey dashed line showing a blocked passing lane. White football near a blue player. Title: 'READ THE EXTRA MAN — Pressing a Back Three'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 3v2 becomes 3v3 • a third presser must arrive or the spare man plays through • 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, three players in blue bibs working the ball between themselves against two pressers in dark green bibs, a third green-bibbed player sprinting in from outside the area to close down the spare player, coach centrally positioned watching the recognition and timing closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Three players in blue bibs working the ball between themselves against two players in dark green bibs. A third player in a dark green bib sprinting in from outside the practice area to close down the spare player. A coach standing centrally, closely watching the recognition and timing of the arriving player. 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 THREE (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the back-three pressing mechanism into a genuine small-sided game, rewarding a regain won specifically against a back-three build-up shape, 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, with the building team specifically organised in a back-three shape
- **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 the building team organises specifically in a back-three shape, and a regain won by the pressing team is worth double. The coach notes, without necessarily announcing, how quickly and how correctly the pressing team identifies and removes the spare man.

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

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

Decision-making triggers: as established in Practice 2, applied under live, directional conditions.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Curved pressing runs applied specifically against a back-three picture.
Tactical	Rapid, correct identification of the spare man under live conditions.
Physical	Repeated high-intensity actions to press and remove the spare man.
Psychological	Confidence to commit a third presser rather than accepting a spare man passively.
Communication & leadership	Calling the spare man and organising the third presser's arrival, in the moment.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was your team's clearest example of correctly identifying and removing the spare man tonight?
2. What happened when the pressing team failed to recognise the back-three shape quickly enough?
3. How does this connect to Week 15's back-four pressing work — what specifically had to change?
4. Why might a back-three build-up sometimes be harder to press than a back four, even with a correctly identified spare man?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine offside line at each end.

2. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on recognition and timing.
3. Instruct the building team to add a dropping midfielder occasionally, testing whether the pressing team recognises a fourth build-up player.

Regressions:

1. Allow the coach to call out when the back-three shape is being used while the recognition skill 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
The pressing team is slow to recognise the back-three shape	Habit of assuming a back-four picture from recent weeks	The spare man is used repeatedly before the pressing team adjusts	Stop	Short group intervention: "what shape are they actually building in?"	Resume
The third presser arrives but the original two pressers lose their own shape	Attention is drawn entirely to the new arrival	The two original pressers drift out of position, creating a different gap	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did we lose something else while gaining the third presser?"	Resume

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

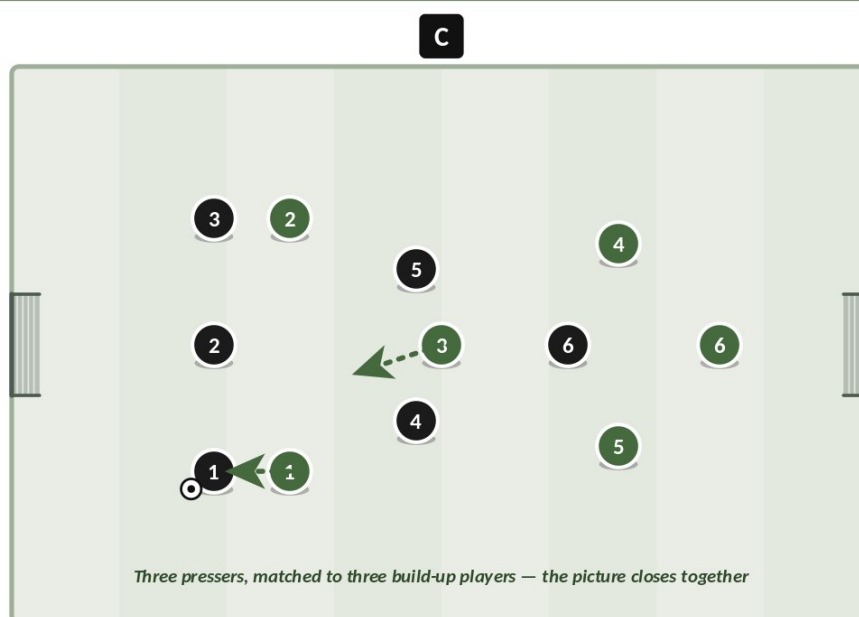
Success indicators:

- The pressing team recognises the back-three shape quickly and consistently.
- The third presser arrives at the correct time to remove the spare man.
- Regains against the back-three shape increase across the practice.

Coach's eye: watch for the moment of recognition, not just the moment of the press — a team that quickly identifies "this is a back three" has already done the hardest part of the job.

T16.3 PRESS THE THREE — Small-Sided Game

34 x 22 m • 6v6 • a regain won against a back-three build-up shape is worth double • 15 minutes



● Building team (back three) ● Pressing team ● Ball ● Collective 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 small goal at each end. Six players in blue bibs numbered 1–6 organised in a back-three build-up shape and six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6 pressing them. White football near a blue player. Two short dotted red press arrows with chevron arrowheads showing green players converging on the build-up. Title: 'PRESS THE THREE — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 6v6 • a regain won against a back-three build-up shape 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, three players in blue bibs organised in a clear back-three shape, green-bibbed pressers converging to remove the spare player, both mini goals visible, coach on the touchline tracking the recognition and timing 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. Three players in blue bibs organised in a clear back-three shape. Players in dark green bibs converging to press and remove the spare player. Late-afternoon light, realistic grass pitch and shadows, amateur adult players of varied build. A coach on the touchline, tracking the recognition and timing closely. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 4 — ADAPT THE PRESS (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, requiring the pressing team to recognise and adapt to an opponent who deliberately alternates between building from a back four and a back three within the same practice, the genuine test of whether the team reads the picture rather than assuming a fixed shape.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the pressing team's goalkeeper is coached specifically on calling the opponent's build-up shape early
- **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 building team is instructed to alternate between a back-four and a back-three build-up shape at intervals set by the coach (without announcing the change), and the pressing team is coached to recognise and adapt its pressing numbers accordingly, applying both Week 15's and this week's pressing pictures inside the same practice.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules.

Tactical roles: the full pressing skill set from Weeks 15 and 16, combined for the first time with a genuinely shape-shifting opponent at match scale.

Decision-making triggers: the full set from both weeks, applied under match conditions with an opponent whose build-up shape changes unpredictably.

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 recognition of which build-up shape is currently being used.
Physical	The week's peak physical demand — repeated adjustments in pressing numbers.
Psychological	Composure to adapt rather than pressing the same way regardless of the picture.
Communication & leadership	The team calling out the opponent's current shape clearly and quickly after each change.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team correctly adapting its press after the opponent's shape changed tonight?
2. How long did it typically take the team to recognise a change in the opponent's build-up shape?
3. Which shape — back four or back three — did the team press more effectively, and why?

- How does this connect to the Season Architecture's Formation/Structure/Principles distinction — is this exactly what that distinction is for?

Progressions:

- Increase the frequency of the opponent's shape changes.
- Add a genuine offside line.
- Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

- Reduce the frequency of shape changes while the recognition skill is being consolidated.
- Reduce to 6v6 on a smaller area.
- Announce each shape change verbally for a few repetitions before removing the announcement.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team is slow to recognise a change in the opponent's build-up shape	Genuine cognitive demand of a shape-shifting opponent	The old pressing picture is applied to the new shape for several phases before adjusting	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The team recognises the change but reacts too slowly to reorganise	Recognition without organisation	A correctly identified spare man remains unpressed for too long	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "we saw it — why didn't we react faster?"	Resume

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

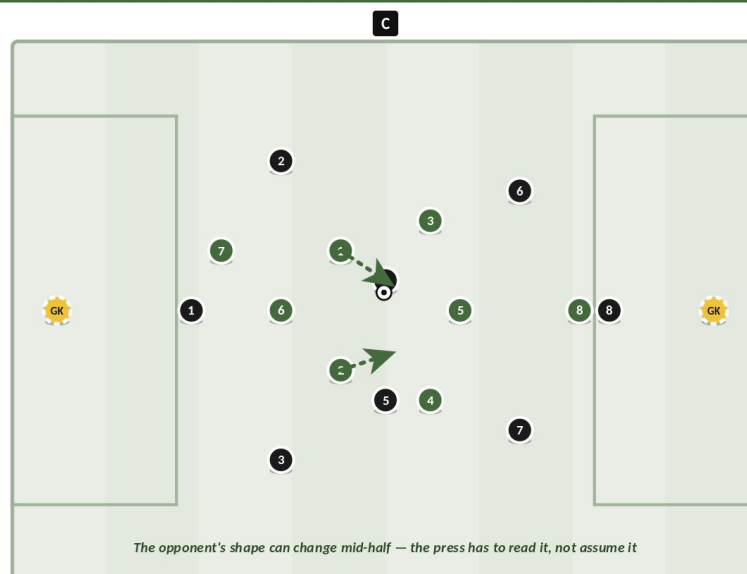
Success indicators:

- The team recognises and adapts to both build-up shapes within the same practice.
- The time between a shape change and a correct pressing adjustment decreases across the practice.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, which shape it found harder to press and why.

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 team reads and adapts to a genuine change, not just whether it can press either shape in isolation.

T16.4 ADAPT THE PRESS — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • the opponent alternates between a back four and a back three — read and adapt • 15 minutes



● Pressing team ● Building team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ● Collective 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, 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 blue bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the area. Two short dotted red press arrows with chevron arrowheads showing green players converging. White football near a central blue player. Title: 'ADAPT THE PRESS — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • the opponent alternates between a back four and a back three — read and adapt • 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, players in blue bibs organised in a build-up shape, green-bibbed pressers converging with visible urgency, coach on the touchline near halfway gesturing and calling out the picture, tracking the whole match closely.

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. Players in blue bibs organised in a build-up shape near their own goal. Players in dark green bibs converging to press with visible urgency. A coach stands near the halfway line on the touchline, gesturing and calling out instructions, closely tracking the whole match. 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: "What shape were they building in for most of tonight's game, and how did we know?"

Thursday — Session 32

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	32 of 72
Week	16
Season phase	3 — Developing Collective Understanding
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Defensive corners & second-phase
Short summary	Reviews the defensive corner structure from Week 5 and adds a genuinely new layer — a named second-phase plan for what happens after the ball is cleared, so a half-cleared corner doesn't hand possession straight back to the opposition.
Tags	`set-pieces` `defending` `unit-work`
Primary learning objective	The defending team has a clear, rehearsed plan for the second ball after a corner is only partially cleared.
Secondary learning objective	A clean defensive clearance is converted quickly into a controlled transition, not an aimless clearance that returns straight to the opposition.
Match connection	Genuine improvement in what happens in the five seconds after a corner is defended, matching the set-piece development pathway's Phase 3 milestone.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer second-phase goals conceded from a corner, and more clean transitions won from a defended set piece.
Expected physical load	Moderate — technical and organisational quality prioritised over physical intensity, rising in the closing game.
Recommended intensity	5.5–6.5 / 10, rising in Practice 4.
Equipment list	16 footballs · 20 flat markers · 10 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	Central to this session — both keepers are needed, commanding their own box in turn and organising the second-phase plan vocally.
Pitch dimensions	Both set-piece practices are worked inside a 44 x 30 m attacking-third-plus area; the closing game uses 40 x 26 m.
Area layout	One end of the pitch, using a real penalty box and goal where available.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Reduce the defensive corner structure to five defenders as established in Week 5's contingency; the second-phase plan survives the reduction with one fewer designated second-ball player.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Add a second wave of attackers rotating in every few repetitions.
Contingency — restricted space	Both practices can be walked through and lightly opposed inside a genuine six-yard-box-and-penalty-area space where the rest of the pitch is unavailable.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:08	8 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Reaction Ready</i>	Light green
0:08–0:25	17 min	Technical practice — <i>Second Ball</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Set-piece practice — <i>Corner Plus One</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Clear and Counter</i>	Black
0:59–1:02	3 min	Reflection	—

(8 + 17 + 2 + 15 + 2 + 15 + 3 = 62; two of the timeline's transition minutes are absorbed into the set-piece practices themselves, which naturally include brief walk-throughs between repetitions — the practical running time is 60 minutes.)

PRACTICE 1 — REACTION READY (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: A light, focused warm-up sharpening reaction speed to a loose ball, preparing the group for a session built specifically around reacting to second balls and rebounds.

Organisation: 16 x 12 m grid, pairs. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully, with their specific warm-up layered in separately.

Walkthrough: One player rolls or bounces a ball unpredictably for a partner to react to and control, gradually increasing unpredictability — a direct technical primer for reading loose, bouncing balls.

Rules: None beyond standard technical practice conduct.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* first touch and control on an unpredictable, bouncing ball.
- *Physical:* sharp, reactive movement.
- *Psychological:* readiness for the unexpected, rather than a settled, predictable picture.

PRACTICE 2 — SECOND BALL (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific skill of reacting to a half-cleared ball — reading its bounce and direction quickly enough to win it before the opposition can reorganise — the foundation for the full second-phase set-piece plan that follows.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 30 x 20 m
- **Players:** small-group rotation, 2 defending vs 1 attacking at a time near a goal
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, reading and reacting to the loose ball themselves

- **Team sizes:** 2 v 1
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 6 balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach serves a fresh, deliberately awkward bouncing ball for each repetition
- **Coach position:** central, serving the loose ball and assessing reactions
- **Rotation method:** groups rotate every four to five repetitions
- **Direction of play:** toward the one goal

Practice walkthrough: The coach serves a deliberately awkward, bouncing ball into the practice area, simulating a half-cleared corner. Two defending players and one attacking player react to win it, with the defending pair coached specifically on communicating who attacks the ball and who covers the space behind.

Rules: The ball is live from the moment it's served; whoever wins clean control first scores a point for their side.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* whichever defender is closer or better placed attacks the ball explosively.
- *Unit:* the second defender covers the space and the follow-up threat, echoing Week 3's pressure-cover-balance principle.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* winning the second ball is itself the beginning of a transition to attack, echoing Week 4's principles.

Decision-making triggers:

- The ball bounces favourably toward one defender → that defender attacks it explosively.
- The ball bounces awkwardly or toward the attacker → the covering defender must be ready to block or contest immediately.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Reading the bounce and reacting explosively to win the ball.
Tactical	Communicating clearly and instantly about who attacks the ball and who covers.
Physical	Sharp, explosive reactions to an unpredictable stimulus.
Psychological	Readiness and urgency in a genuinely unpredictable moment.
Communication & leadership	Calling "Mine" or "Cover" instantly and clearly.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the defending pair who should attack the ball and who should cover?
2. What happened when both defenders went for the ball at the same time, or neither did?
3. Why is winning the second ball considered the start of a transition to attack, not just a defensive action?
4. How does this connect to Week 3's pressure-cover-balance principle?

Progressions:

1. Add a second attacker, increasing the picture's realism and difficulty.
2. Serve the ball from a genuine corner delivery rather than a direct serve.
3. Add a condition that winning the second ball must be followed by an immediate forward pass or dribble.

Regressions:

1. Serve a less awkward, more predictable bounce while the reaction skill is being learned.
2. Reduce to a simple 1v1 for the loose ball.
3. Allow an extra half-second before the ball is considered live.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Both defenders go for the ball simultaneously, leaving no cover	Lack of clear communication under a sudden, reactive moment	Both defenders converge, and the attacker exploits the space behind	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: rehearse the communication explicitly	Resume
Neither defender reacts quickly enough, and the attacker wins the ball easily	Hesitation in an unpredictable moment	The attacker wins clean control with minimal contest	Stop	Short group intervention: urgency and explosiveness on the reaction	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct* for communication, moving to *short group intervention* for urgency.

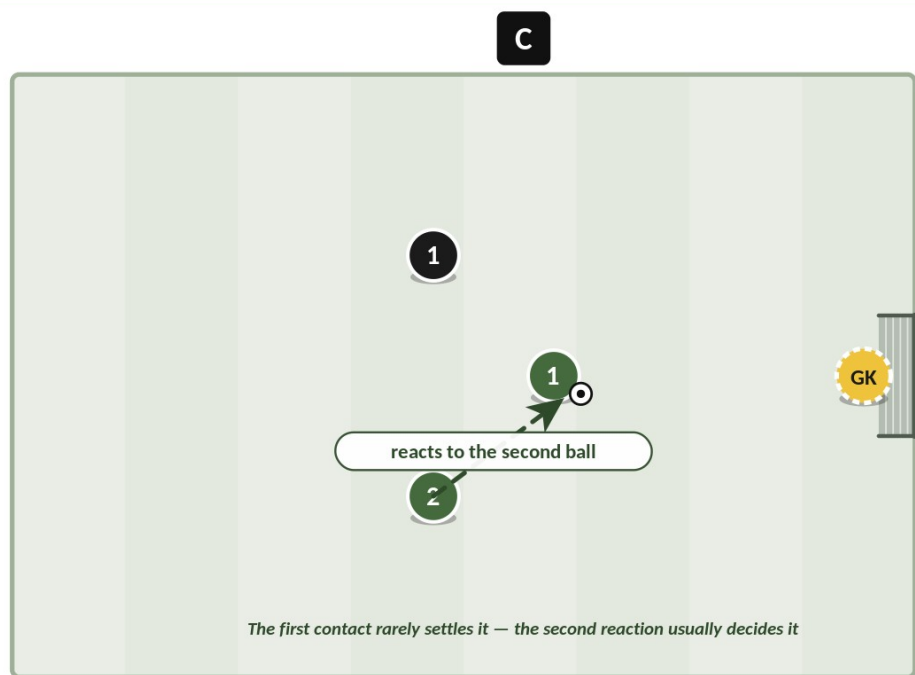
Success indicators:

- The defending pair communicates clearly and instantly about who attacks and who covers.
- Second balls are won cleanly and explosively at an increasing rate.
- A won second ball is followed by a purposeful, forward-thinking action.

Coach's eye: watch for the split-second decision between the two defenders — a pair that resolves "who attacks, who covers" instantly and without collision is showing exactly what this practice is built to produce.

H16.2 SECOND BALL — Reading the Rebound

30 x 20 m · reacting to a half-cleared corner before the opposition can reorganise · 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Attacking team ● Ball ➡ Reacts to the second ball

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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 showing a full-size goal with a goalkeeper in yellow. One player in dark green bibs numbered 1 with a football nearby, representing a loose second ball. A second player in dark green bibs numbered 2 positioned slightly behind. One player in blue bibs numbered 1 nearby, representing the attacking team. A short dashed run arrow labelled 'reacts to the second ball' showing the second green player moving toward the loose ball. Title: 'SECOND BALL — Reading the Rebound'. Subtitle: '30 x 20 m · reacting to a half-cleared corner before the opposition can reorganise · 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 near a goal, a loose, bouncing ball in the air between two green-bibbed defenders and a blue-bibbed attacker, all three reacting explosively toward it, goalkeeper alert in the background, coach observing the reaction speed closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training near a goal. A loose, bouncing football in the air between two players in dark green bibs and one player in a blue bib, all three reacting explosively toward it. The goalkeeper, in yellow, alert in the background. A coach standing to the side, closely observing the speed of the reaction. 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 — CORNER PLUS ONE (DEFENSIVE CORNER + SECOND-PHASE — SET-PIECE PROGRAMME)

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

Tactical purpose: Reviews and confirms Week 5's defensive corner organisation, then adds the genuinely new layer this week is built around — a named plan for the second phase, so the team knows exactly where a partial clearance should go and who is responsible for winning it.

Set-Piece Programme fields (second-phase addition to Week 5's structure):

FIELD	DETAIL
Purpose	To ensure a half-cleared corner is won and converted into controlled possession rather than immediately returning to the attacking team.
Player roles and starting positions	Week 5's zonal-plus-post structure is unchanged (near-post defender, far-post defender, two zonal markers, one player marking the most dangerous opponent, two out-ball players beyond the box). This week adds: two second-phase players , positioned just outside the penalty area specifically to win any clearance that doesn't reach the two out-ball players cleanly.
Delivery type addressed	As established in Week 5 — the structure is delivery-agnostic.
Runs	The two second-phase players hold a slightly deeper, more central starting position than the out-ball players, anticipating that a clearance under pressure often falls short or centrally rather than reaching the wide out-ball positions cleanly.
Legal blocks/screens note	As established in Week 5; unchanged.
Rebound positions	The near-post and far-post defenders remain the first line for a rebound off the goalkeeper, as in Week 5; the two second-phase players are specifically for a clearance that leaves the penalty area but isn't clean.
Rest defence / transition protection	The two out-ball players beyond the box (Week 5) and the two second-phase players (this week) work together: whichever picture actually occurs — a clean clearance to the out-ball players, or a scrappy second ball — the team has a designated player already positioned to win it and start the transition, directly extending Week 4's transition-to-attack principle to this specific moment.
Alternative option	If the opposition consistently wins the second ball after a corner, the two second-phase players can push slightly higher and more central, accepting a small risk to the out-ball structure in exchange for greater control of the immediate second phase.
Opposition cues	An opposition with clear plans to crash the edge of the box for rebounds (some teams specifically load this area) means the second-phase players' starting positions should be adjusted centrally; an opposition with no such plan allows the second-phase players to sit slightly wider, closer to the out-ball positions.
Contingency for a key player unavailable	If a nominated second-phase player is unavailable, the role is absorbed by the nearest zonal marker once their immediate defensive job (attacking the delivery) is complete — rehearsed explicitly so the second-phase plan survives a Saturday absence.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** worked inside the same 44 x 30 m area as Week 5's corner practices
- **Players:** 6 defending outfield + goalkeeper, vs 6 attackers + corner taker

- **Goalkeeper involvement:** commands the box and organises the whole picture, as in Week 5
- **Team sizes:** 6 defenders + GK v 6 attackers (including corner taker)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for zonal and second-phase reference positions
- **Ball supply:** a supply of balls with the attacking team's corner taker
- **Restart location:** the corner arc

Practice walkthrough: Week 5's defensive corner structure is walked through first to confirm it hasn't drifted, then the two second-phase players are added and briefed on their specific job. Repetitions progress from a coach-served, deliberately partial clearance (isolating the second-phase reaction) to a fully live corner where the second-phase plan may or may not be needed, depending on how cleanly the initial delivery is defended.

Rules: Standard corner-kick and offside rules apply.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Attacking the ball aggressively at both the initial delivery and any second-phase moment.
Tactical	Correct positioning and reaction of the two second-phase players specifically.
Physical	Explosive actions at two distinct moments — the initial delivery and, where needed, the second phase.
Psychological	Sustained concentration through a set piece that may have more than one moment of real danger.
Communication & leadership	The goalkeeper's voice organising both the initial structure and, where needed, the second-phase reaction.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What is the specific job of the two second-phase players, and how is it different from the two out-ball players?
2. Why might a clearance that leaves the box not automatically reach the out-ball players?
3. How does this connect to Week 4's transition-to-attack principle — is winning the second phase actually the start of an attack?
4. What would you adjust about the second-phase positioning against a team that specifically targets rebounds?

Progressions:

1. Add a live attacking routine (as in Week 5's opposed practice) with a deliberately weighted chance of a partial clearance.
2. Introduce a second wave of attackers specifically for the second-phase moment, testing the plan against real numbers.
3. Rotate the second-phase role among different players, testing whether the plan survives changing personnel.

Regressions:

1. Walk the second-phase reaction through with no opposition for longer before adding any.
2. Reduce to one second-phase player rather than two while the concept is learned.
3. Allow the coach to call out the second-phase player's job during the first several repetitions.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The second-phase players drift into the box to help with the initial delivery	Attention pulled toward the more exciting first phase of	The second-phase positions are empty when a partial clearance actually	Stop, every time	Firm, immediate correction, consistent with Week 5's rest-defence standard	Resume from a fresh corner

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
	the routine	occurs			
A won second ball isn't converted into a purposeful transition	The moment is treated as purely defensive rather than the start of an attack	The ball is cleared aimlessly rather than played forward with intent	Let it flow with a drive-by call	"That's a transition now — what's the picture?"	Continue

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *demonstration* and *rehearsal* early, with the non-negotiable positioning rule enforced every time, as in Week 5's original practices.

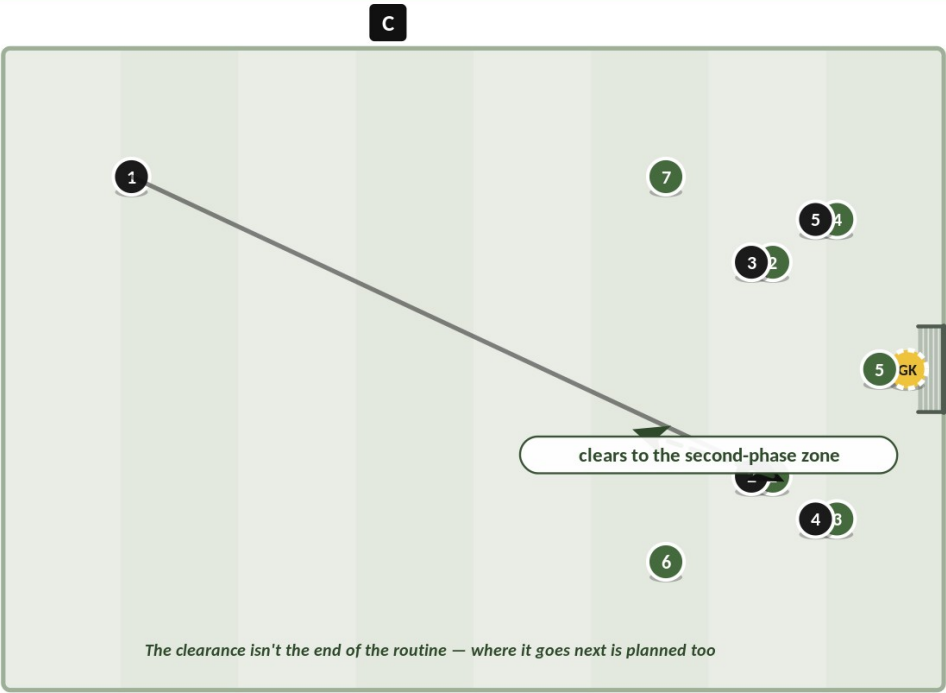
Success indicators:

- The two second-phase players hold their positions on every repetition.
- Partial clearances are won more often than they're conceded back to the attacking team.
- A won second ball is converted into a purposeful, forward-thinking action.

Coach's eye: watch the moment immediately after any clearance, clean or partial — this practice's entire value is in what happens in the two or three seconds that follow, not just the clearance itself.

H16.3 CORNER PLUS ONE — Defensive Corner + Second-Phase

Zonal + post structure from Week 5, now with a named second-phase plan for the clearance • 15 minutes



● Defending team

● Attacking team

● Goalkeeper

○ Ball

→ Second-phase transition run

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing a penalty box area on the right side of a 44x30 metre pitch. A full-size goal on the right edge with a goalkeeper in yellow. Five players in dark green bibs organised in a zonal-plus-post structure inside and around the six-yard box, and two more dark green players positioned just outside the penalty area labelled as second-phase players. A player in blue labelled C at the corner arc, with four more blue-bibbed attackers marked inside the box and one more outside. A black solid arrow showing the corner delivery, and a short dashed run arrow labelled 'clears to the second-phase zone'. Title: 'CORNER PLUS ONE — Defensive Corner + Second-Phase'. Subtitle: 'Zonal + post structure from

Week 5, now with a named second-phase plan for the clearance · 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 from behind the goal of a defending team organised for a corner, the familiar zonal-plus-post structure inside the box, two additional green-bibbed players clearly positioned just outside the box as a distinct group from the wider out-ball players, goalkeeper commanding the box vocally, coach observing from pitch level.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter view from behind the goal of an adult amateur football team organised to defend a corner kick on a grass pitch. Defenders in dark green bibs positioned on the near and far posts and across the six-yard box in a zonal structure. Two additional players in dark green bibs positioned just outside the penalty area, clearly a distinct group focused on winning any loose second ball. A goalkeeper in yellow at the centre of the goal, visibly organising and calling out to team-mates. Players in blue bibs preparing to attack the incoming delivery. A coach standing at pitch level near the box, observing closely. Overcast evening light, realistic grass pitch and penalty box markings, 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 — CLEAR AND COUNTER (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the week by rehearsing the full defensive corner and second-phase plan under genuine game pressure, rewarding both a clean defensive outcome and a fast, purposeful transition immediately afterward.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 26 m
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role, each organising their own defensive corner and second-phase plan when required

- **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:** the coach awards a corner to alternate teams roughly every 90 seconds, regardless of how the ball actually left play

- **Coach position:** touchline, mobile
- **Rotation method:** none required
- **Direction of play:** standard, both teams attack opposite goals

Practice walkthrough: A normal 8v8 game, interrupted every 90 seconds or so by the coach awarding a corner (alternating which team) regardless of how play actually stopped. A bonus point is awarded for a clean defensive outcome (no clear chance conceded) that is converted into a controlled transition of at least three passes before the ball is lost or the next corner is awarded.

Rules: Standard small-sided-game rules; corner restarts awarded by the coach as described; the bonus condition as stated.

Tactical roles: the full defensive corner and second-phase skill set, now inside live, continuous play.

Decision-making triggers: as established in Practice 3, now applied without a clean, isolated repetition to prepare for.

Communication language used: the full season's language, plus this week's second-phase organisation calls.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution quality under the pressure of a live game rather than an isolated practice.
Tactical	Recognising and executing the correct structure and second-phase plan the instant a corner is awarded.
Physical	A different physical picture from the rest of the session — short, explosive set-piece actions inside an otherwise flowing game.
Psychological	Confidence heading into the weekend, having rehearsed the full routine under realistic pressure.
Communication & leadership	Organising the routine quickly after a corner is awarded, without needing a full walkthrough each time.

Guided discovery questions:

1. How quickly could your team organise the full structure, including the second-phase plan, once a corner was awarded?

2. What happened differently when the corner was cleanly defended versus when a second-phase reaction was needed?
3. Did the resulting transition feel purposeful, or was the clearance just a relief?
4. What is one thing about tonight's defensive corner and second-phase plan you feel confident about heading into Saturday?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the interval between awarded corners, raising the frequency of practice.
2. Remove the coach's artificial awarding and rely on corners won naturally within the game.
3. Increase the bonus pass requirement for the transition to five passes.

Regressions:

1. Increase the interval between awarded corners, reducing the practice's density.
2. Allow a brief walkthrough pause before each awarded corner while the routine is still being learned.
3. Reduce to 6v6 if fatigue is visible this late in the week.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Second-phase organisation is slow, disrupting the game's flow	The plan is still new, first time applied inside live play	Long pauses or confusion before the second-phase players find their positions	Let it flow	Light-touch encouragement — expected in the first week of a new plan	Continue
A clean clearance is wasted with no attempt at a purposeful transition	Habit of treating a clearance as the end of the defensive job rather than the start of an attack	The ball is cleared aimlessly with no follow-up passing sequence	Stop, every time this happens	Firm, immediate correction, connecting to Week 4's transition principle	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: consistent enforcement of the non-negotiable positioning rule, otherwise light-touch encouragement.

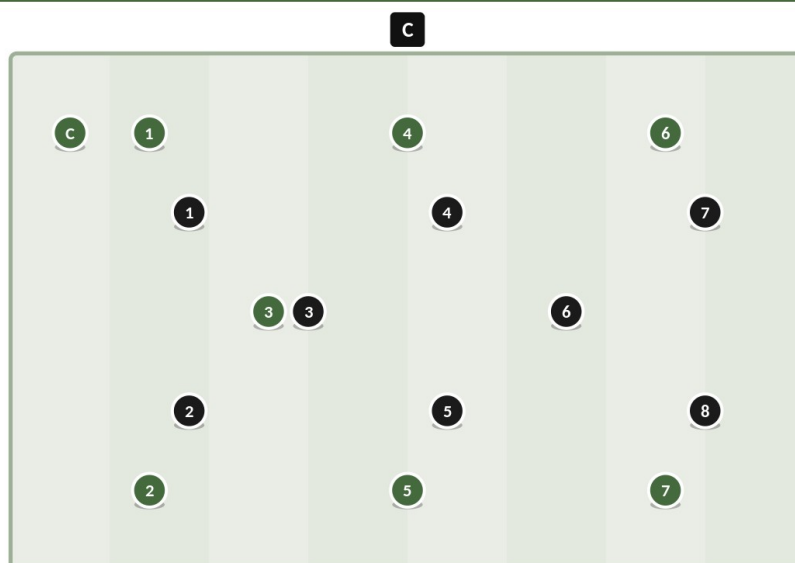
Success indicators:

- The full structure, including the second-phase plan, is organised and executed within a reasonable time of being awarded.
- Clean defensive outcomes increase across the practice.
- Clearances are converted into purposeful transitions more often than aimless ones.

Coach's eye: as in every Thursday session, finish by reading the group's confidence as closely as their execution.

H16.4 CLEAR AND COUNTER — Confidence Game

40 x 26 m · 8v8 · restarts every 90s with a corner, bonus for a clean defence into a fast transition · 15 minutes



● Team A ● Team B ● Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing a 40x26 metre pitch with penalty box markings and a goal at each end. A player in dark green labelled C at a corner arc. Seven more players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and eight players in blue bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch in match positions. Title: 'CLEAR AND COUNTER — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '40 x 26 m · 8v8 · restarts every 90s with a corner, bonus for a clean defence into a fast transition · 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 normal 8v8 game paused for a corner kick, a green-bibbed corner taker about to deliver, both teams organised in their attacking and defensive corner structures, full-size goals visible, coach on the touchline having just awarded the restart, checking a watch or timer.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 8v8 football game paused for a corner kick on a grass pitch with full-size goals. A player in a dark green bib about to deliver a corner kick, both teams organised in clear attacking and defensive structures around the box. A coach stands on the touchline, having just awarded the restart, glancing at a stopwatch. Warm, late-afternoon light, realistic grass pitch and shadows, amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

REFLECTION (FINAL 3 MINUTES, SEATED)

Seated as a group, captain(s) present.

Questions put to the group:

1. What is your job in the second-phase plan, and can you state it without checking?
2. What was the clearest example tonight of a defended set piece turning into a genuine attack?
3. What's one thing you know needs sharper drilling before Saturday?

Coach's closing input: confirm the second-phase plan is match-ready, and connect it explicitly to Tuesday's pressing work — both sessions this week were, at heart, about reading a picture correctly and reacting to it as a unit.

Match-Day Objectives — Week 16

Three team objectives:

1. Recognise the opponent's build-up shape — back four or back three — and press with the correctly matched numbers.
2. Adapt the pressing picture if the opponent changes its build-up shape during the match.
3. Execute the second-phase plan on at least one defended corner, converting a clearance into a controlled transition.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** organise and call the opponent's build-up shape clearly and early.
2. **Midfield unit:** provide the extra pressing body when a back-three shape is identified.
3. **Front players:** press with the curved-run, cover-shadow technique regardless of which build-up shape is being pressed.

Individual role reminders:

- Count the opponent's build-up numbers before deciding how many pressers to commit.
- On a defended corner, hold your second-phase or out-ball position until the picture genuinely resolves.
- A clean clearance is the start of an attack, not the end of a defensive job.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Number of regains won specifically against a back-three build-up shape.
- Time taken to adapt the press after the opponent changes its build-up shape.
- Number of second-phase moments won cleanly after a corner.
- Number of purposeful transitions (three or more passes) following a defended set piece.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Shapes

Pressing a back three:

STRUCTURE	WHO PROVIDES THE THIRD PRESSER	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	WHAT CHANGES	KEY RISK
4-3-3	A wide midfielder or full-back stepping up	The recognition and removal-of-spare-man principle	The specific player providing the third body depends on which side of the pitch the ball is on	The stepping player leaving a gap in the defending team's own structure
3-4-3 / back-three pressing structure	The front two plus a wide player, already closer to a natural three-presser picture	The recognition and removal-of-spare-man principle	Less structural adjustment is usually needed than a back-four pressing team requires	Both forwards pressing centrally, leaving the wide player isolated against two build-up options

Defensive corners & second-phase:

STRUCTURE	WHO FILLS THE SECOND-PHASE ROLES	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	WHAT CHANGES	KEY RISK
4-3-3	Two central midfielders, positioned just outside the box	The zonal-plus-post structure and the second-phase positioning principle	Which specific players are best suited depends on who is on the pitch	The second-phase players drifting into the box under the excitement of the delivery
3-4-3	The double pivot	The zonal-plus-post structure and the second-phase positioning principle	A back three often frees a central midfielder to focus purely on the second phase	Over-committing both pivot players to the second phase, leaving no protection if the ball breaks wide instead

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.