



Week 19 — Tactical Adaptability

Tags: `possession` `build-up` `structural-adaptability` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	19 of 36
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Core principle	Progression: through, around or over
Secondary principle	Overloads & rest defence
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Week 18 taught the team to change structure mid-match. This week goes a level deeper: rather than one fixed build-up pattern, the team is given three alternative starting shapes — a 2-3, a 3-2, and a 3-1 — each solving the same problem (progressing the ball past the first line of pressure while protecting rest defence) in a slightly different way. The tactical skill being taught is not memorising three patterns, but recognising which one the picture in front of the team actually calls for.
Formation-neutral explanation	A build-up "shape" described by numbers (2-3, 3-2, 3-1) is a description of how many players occupy the first and second lines of the build-up, not a formation label — any team, whatever its nominal formation, can build in any of these patterns depending on who drops, who steps, and who holds width.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 team can build in a 2-3 (two centre-backs, with a holding midfielder and both full-backs forming the next line) or a 3-2 (a full-back or the holding midfielder dropping to make a back three, with two central midfielders as the pivot). A 3-4-3 team naturally builds in something close to a 3-2 already, and can convert toward a 3-1 by asking one pivot player to push higher, leaving the other as the lone holding presence. The same three patterns are available to different formations; which one is chosen depends on the opponent's press, not the shirt numbers.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, check whether the build-up pattern used was genuinely chosen for the picture, or simply the one the team defaults to regardless of opponent — a good result doesn't confirm the choice was optimal. Name it if worth naming.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team was repeatedly stuck in a build-up pattern that didn't suit the opponent's press, 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. All three patterns scale to reduced numbers — the underlying skill (reading the press and choosing the shape that solves it) matters more than rehearsing all three at full numbers every week.

Tuesday — Session 37

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	37 of 72
Week	19
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Alternative build-up: 2-3 vs 3-2
Short summary	Introduces two alternative build-up shapes side by side — a 2-3 (two centre-backs, three players forming the first receiving line) and a 3-2 (a back three with a double pivot ahead) — and teaches the team to recognise which one better solves the picture the opponent's press presents.
Tags	`possession` `build-up` `structural-adaptability`
Primary learning objective	The team can build cleanly in either a 2-3 or a 3-2 shape, choosing between them based on the opponent's press numbers.
Secondary learning objective	Rest defence is maintained in both shapes, not just the one the team is more comfortable in.
Match connection	This week's foundation for the match-day connection named for Thursday: build-up unaffected by which shape is used.
Expected tactical outcome	Cleaner progression past the first line of pressure, regardless of which of the two shapes is chosen.
Expected physical load	Moderate — decision-density is high, physical intensity is moderate.
Recommended intensity	6.5–7.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 22 flat markers · 14 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; in Practice 4 the goalkeeper is coached as an active build-up participant in both shapes.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	Two side-by-side comparison zones for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 runs one shape at a time rather than side by side; Practice 3 becomes 5v4; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Run the two shapes sequentially rather than side by side in Practice 2; the comparison principle survives this adjustment.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

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

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Two Shapes, Same Ball</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Pick the Picture</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Build Your Way</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — COUNT AND BUILD (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of counting the opposition's press numbers and matching a build-up group size to it, 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 vary in size, and the coach periodically calls a number of pressers to introduce; the possession group must instantly reorganise its spacing to match — a simple, physical rehearsal of adjusting shape to opposition numbers.

Rules: The possession group must reorganise within three seconds of the call.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean spacing adjustment under time pressure.
- *Psychological:* rapid recognition and reorganisation.

PRACTICE 2 — TWO SHAPES, SAME BALL (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces both build-up shapes side by side, so players can feel directly the different passing lanes and body shapes each one creates against the same press picture.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 44 x 24 m, split into two comparison zones
- **Players:** 5 possession players vs 2 pressers in each zone (10 possession, 4 pressers total)
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, one per zone
- **Team sizes:** 5 v 2 in each zone
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for each shape's reference positions
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls per zone
- **Restart:** coach restarts each zone on any stoppage
- **Coach position:** mobile between the two zones
- **Rotation method:** groups swap zones (and shapes) at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** possession retention, both zones

Practice walkthrough: One zone rehearses the 2-3 shape (two centre-backs split wide, three players — a holding midfielder and both full-backs, or equivalent — forming the next receiving line); the other rehearses the 3-2 shape (a back three, with two central players forming a double pivot). Both groups face an identical two-presser picture, so the only variable is the shape itself.

Rules: Standard possession-retention rules in each zone; groups swap shapes at the midpoint so everyone experiences both.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* each player's specific job differs between the two shapes — a full-back is a build-up option in a 2-3 but a rest-defence player in a 3-2, for example.
- *Unit:* the whole group's spacing and passing lanes change with the shape.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- Not applicable in the strict sense — this practice is comparison-focused; the decision-making layer is added in Practice 3.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean passing and receiving technique specific to each shape's spacing.
Tactical	Understanding which passing lanes each shape opens and closes.
Physical	Positional discipline specific to each shape.
Psychological	Comfort operating in both shapes, not just the more familiar one.
Communication & leadership	Players confirming which shape the group is currently building in.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What passing lane did the 2-3 shape open that the 3-2 shape didn't, or vice versa?
2. Which shape did your group find more comfortable, and why might that not always be the right choice?
3. How did each player's individual job change between the two shapes?
4. How does this connect to Week 18's structural-change work — is this the same idea applied to starting shapes rather than mid-possession changes?

Progressions:

1. Add a third presser to each zone, testing whether the shape still holds.
2. Reduce the time allowed to reorganise into each shape.
3. Add a condition requiring a specific type of progression (through, around, or over) from each shape.

Regressions:

1. Walk each shape through with no opposition before adding any.
2. Widen each zone for more time and space.
3. Reduce to one presser per zone.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Players revert to their more familiar shape's habits even when asked to build in the other	Genuine unfamiliarity with the less-practised shape	Positioning and passing lanes resemble the wrong shape	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset positions to the correct shape	Resume
A player's individual job is unclear in the less familiar shape	The role change between shapes hasn't been fully understood	Confusion or hesitation about where to stand or what to offer	Stop	Short group intervention: clarify each player's specific job in this shape	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct* and *short group intervention*, since building genuine comfort in two distinct shapes is the entire teaching point.

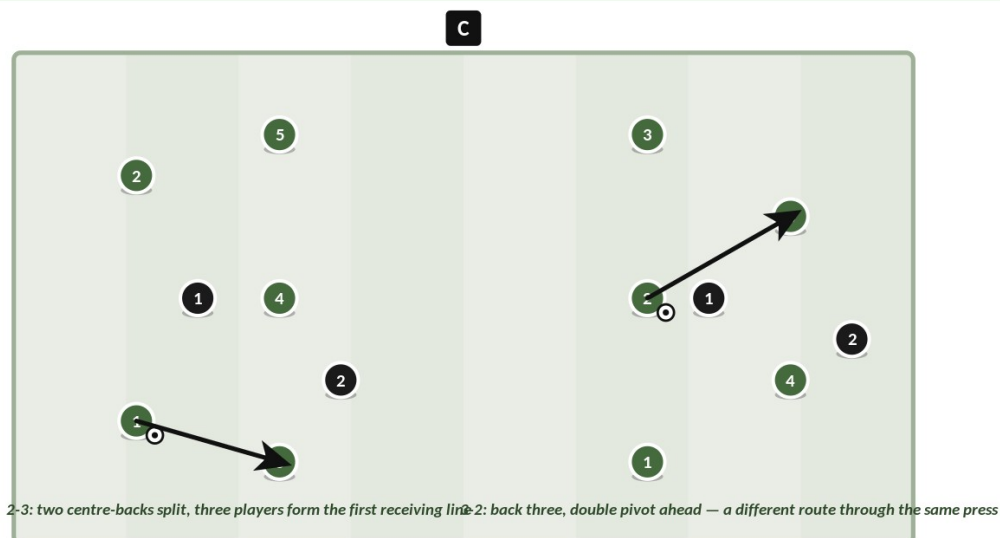
Success indicators:

- Both groups can build cleanly in either shape by the end of the practice.
- Players can state their specific job correctly in both shapes.
- Passing lanes are used appropriately for whichever shape is in use.

Coach's eye: watch for genuine comfort, not just correct positioning — a player who still has to think hard about where to stand hasn't yet internalised the shape.

T19.2 TWO SHAPES, SAME BALL — 2-3 vs 3-2 Build-Up

44 x 24 m • two groups rehearse different build-up shapes against the same press picture • 15 minutes



● 2-3 shape (2 CBs, 3 ahead) ● 3-2 shape (3 back, 2 pivot) ● Pressers ● Ball
➔ Progression 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. A 44x24 metre area split into two zones. Left zone: five players in dark green bibs numbered 1-5 arranged in a 2-3 build-up shape (two players split wide and deep, three ahead of them), with two players in black bibs numbered 1-2 pressing. Right zone: five players in dark green bibs numbered 1-5 arranged in a 3-2 build-up shape (three players across the back, two ahead as a pivot), with two players in black bibs numbered 1-2 pressing. White footballs near a green player in each zone. Black solid arrows showing progression passes in each zone. Title: 'TWO SHAPES, SAME BALL — 2-3 vs 3-2 Build-Up'. Subtitle: '44 x 24 m • two groups rehearse different build-up shapes against the same press picture • 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 training pitch divided into two zones, one group of green-bibbed players organised in a clear 2-3 build-up shape on the left, a second group organised in a clear 3-2 shape on the right, black-bibbed pressers in each zone, coach moving between the two zones observing both shapes.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated wide three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training on a pitch divided into two zones. One group of players in dark green bibs organised in a clear 2-3 build-up shape on the left side. A second group of players in dark green bibs organised in a clear 3-2 build-up shape on the right side. Players in black bibs pressing in each zone. A coach moving between the two zones, observing both shapes. 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 — PICK THE PICTURE (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the two build-up shapes into a genuine possession game against a single, real opposition group, requiring the team to decide live which shape better solves the picture rather than rehearsing each in isolation.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 7 possession players vs 5 opposition
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 5
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers, 6 cones
- **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:** groups swap every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention and progression

Practice walkthrough: Seven possession players face five opposition players and must choose, without being told, whether a 2-3 or a 3-2 shape better solves the picture in front of them, reorganising fluidly as the picture changes. A clean progression past the opposition's press scores a point regardless of which shape produced it.

Rules: Standard possession-progression rules; the coach notes, without necessarily announcing, which shape the team is currently using and whether it's the better choice.

Tactical roles: the full comparative skill set from Practice 2, now applied as a live decision rather than a rehearsed comparison.

Decision-making triggers:

- The opposition presses with two players high → the 2-3 shape is likely to cope more comfortably.
- The opposition presses with three players, or targets the space a 2-3 shape leaves centrally → the 3-2 shape may solve it better.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean execution in whichever shape is chosen.
Tactical	Genuine, live decision-making about which shape the picture calls for.
Physical	Repeated positional adjustments as the picture and chosen shape change.
Psychological	Confidence to commit to a shape rather than hesitating between two options.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and confirming which shape it's currently building in.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the team which shape was the better choice at a given moment?
2. What happened when the wrong shape was chosen for the picture in front of the team?
3. How quickly did the team reorganise once the opposition's press picture changed?

4. How does this connect to Week 18's mid-match structural-change work?

Progressions:

1. Instruct the opposition to change its pressing numbers periodically, testing whether the team recognises and adapts the shape.
2. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the decision.
3. Add a genuine offside line.

Regressions:

1. Allow the coach to call out the recommended shape while the decision-making skill is being built.
2. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
3. Reduce to 6v4 for more space per player.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team defaults to one shape regardless of the picture	Comfort with the more familiar shape overrides the genuine decision	The same shape is used even when the picture clearly favours the other	Stop	Short group intervention: "does this picture actually call for that shape?"	Resume
The team hesitates between shapes, settling into neither clearly	Uncertainty about which shape to commit to	Positioning is ambiguous, matching neither shape well	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "which shape were we trying to be there?"	Resume

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

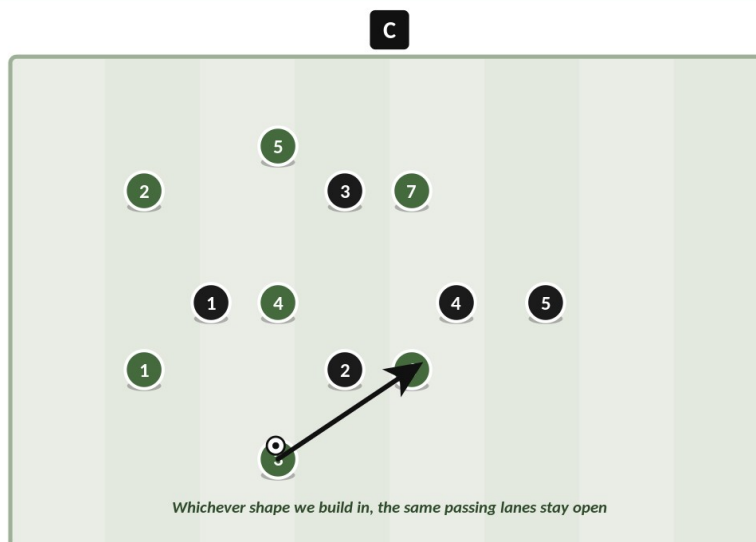
Success indicators:

- The team varies its chosen shape based on the genuine picture, not habit.
- Progression past the opposition's press increases across the practice.
- The team commits clearly to whichever shape it chooses, rather than settling for an ambiguous hybrid.

Coach's eye: watch for the moment of commitment — a team that clearly settles into one shape or the other, even briefly, is showing more understanding than one that drifts indecisively between both.

T19.3 PICK THE PICTURE — Small-Sided Game

34 x 22 m • 7v5 • progress cleanly using either a 2-3 or a 3-2 shape — the picture decides which • 15 minutes



● Possession team ● Opposition ● Ball ➔ Progression 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. A 34x22 metre area with dimension labels. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 organised in a build-up shape and five players in black bibs numbered 1–5 pressing. White football near a green player. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a progression pass. Title: 'PICK THE PICTURE — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v5 • progress cleanly using either a 2-3 or a 3-2 shape — the picture decides which • 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, seven green-bibbed players organised in a build-up shape against five black-bibbed opponents, a clean progression pass breaking the press, coach on the touchline tracking which shape the team is currently using.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Seven players in dark green bibs organised in a build-up shape against five players in black bibs pressing. A clean progression pass breaking through the press. A coach on the touchline, closely tracking the team's shape. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture, amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 4 — BUILD YOUR WAY (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, requiring the building team to choose between a 2-3 and a 3-2 shape based on the opposition's genuine press numbers, while maintaining rest defence in either choice.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the building team's goalkeeper is an active participant in both shapes

- **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 pressing team varies its numbers committed to the press at intervals, and the building team is coached to recognise this and choose the correct build-up shape in response, applying the full week's teaching at match scale.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules.

Tactical roles: the full comparative and decision-making skill set, combined for the first time with a genuinely varying 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, in whichever shape is chosen.
Tactical	Genuine, live recognition of which shape the opponent's press numbers call for.
Physical	Repeated positional reorganisation combined with the week's peak physical demand.
Psychological	Composure to commit to a shape rather than hesitating.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and confirming its chosen shape out loud.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team correctly choosing between the two shapes tonight?
2. How did rest defence differ between the two shapes when they were used?
3. How does this connect to Week 10's overload-and-rest-defence decision-making — is choosing a build-up shape a similar kind of judgement?
4. What did the pressing team have to solve once your team settled into each shape?

Progressions:

1. Instruct the pressing team to vary its numbers more frequently.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

1. Instruct the pressing team to keep its numbers more consistent while the recognition skill is being consolidated.
2. Reduce to 6v6 on a smaller area.
3. Reintroduce Practice 2's side-by-side comparison briefly if the shapes have broken down under full match conditions.

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 opposition's press numbers	Genuine cognitive demand of a live, varying picture	The wrong shape persists for several phases before adjusting	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
Rest defence is compromised in one of the two shapes specifically	The less familiar shape's rest-defence job hasn't been fully internalised	A specific shape consistently leaves gaps behind the ball	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "who was providing rest defence in that shape?"	Resume

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

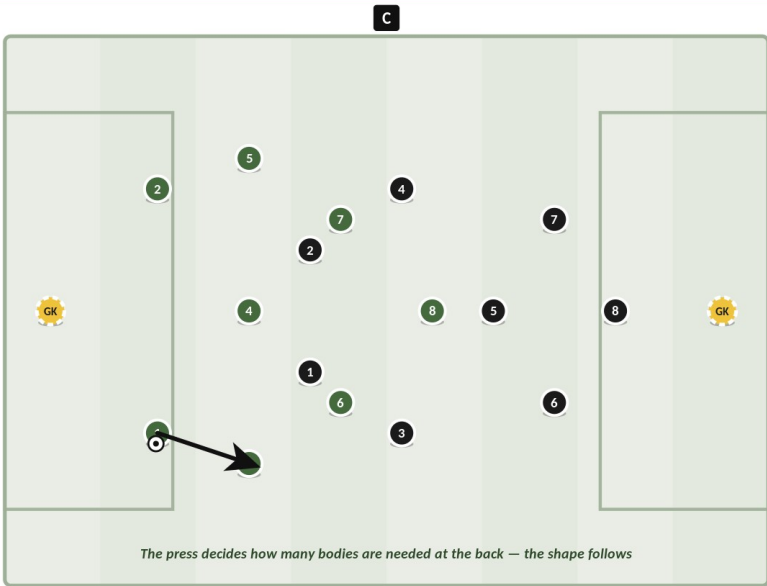
Success indicators:

- The team recognises and chooses the correct shape for the opponent's press numbers.
- Rest defence is maintained in both shapes.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, which shape it used and why.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of whether Tuesday's teaching has transferred — judge it specifically against the quality of the decision between the two shapes, not just whether either shape works in isolation.

T19.4 BUILD YOUR WAY — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • choose a 2-3 or 3-2 build-up shape based on the opposition's press numbers • 15 minutes



Building team
 Opposition press
 Goalkeeper
 Ball
 Progression pass

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 organised in a build-up shape and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 pressing. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a progression pass. White football near a green player. Title: 'BUILD YOUR WAY — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) · 8v8 + GKs · choose a 2-3 or 3-2 build-up shape based on the opposition's press numbers · 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, green-bibbed players organised in a clear build-up shape, a clean progression pass breaking through a pressing black-bibbed opponent, 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. Players in dark green bibs organised in a clear build-up shape. A clean progression pass breaking through a pressing opponent in a black bib. 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: "Which shape did we build in most tonight, and was that genuinely the right choice for the picture?"

Thursday — Session 38

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	38 of 72
Week	19
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Alternative build-up: 3-1
Short summary	Introduces a third build-up shape — a back three with a single, lone holding pivot ahead of it — teaching the specific reading and receiving skills a lone pivot needs to make this leaner structure work under pressure.
Tags	`possession` `build-up` `structural-adaptability`
Primary learning objective	The lone pivot player finds and uses the pocket a back three creates, receiving under pressure and progressing the ball.
Secondary learning objective	The back three provides enough passing options on its own that the lone pivot isn't the only route through the press.
Match connection	The week's named match-day connection: build-up unaffected by which shape is used.
Expected tactical outcome	Clean progression through a leaner, 3-1 build-up shape, without the team needing extra bodies to solve the picture.
Expected physical load	Moderate — similar demand to Tuesday.
Recommended intensity	6.5–7.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout, providing a genuine passing option alongside the back three.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 34 m (Practice 3).
Area layout	A tight technical zone for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 3 reduces to a 6-player build-up group 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 pocket; 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>Find the Pocket</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>The Lone Pivot</i>	Club green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>3-1 Break</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Trust the One</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — FIND THE POCKET (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Reconnects to Week 12's pocket-recognition work, since the lone pivot's job is fundamentally about finding and using a single, well-placed pocket of space.

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

Walkthrough: Paired passing in which the receiving player must check their shoulder and move into a marked pocket before receiving, rehearsing the scan-and-move sequence from Week 12 in isolation before the full practice adds opposition.

Rules: The receiver must be inside the marked pocket before the ball arrives.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* body shape and movement into the pocket before receiving.
- *Psychological:* the habit of moving to create the picture, not waiting for it to appear.

PRACTICE 2 — THE LONE PIVOT (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific skill the lone pivot player needs in a 3-1 build-up — finding and using the single central pocket a back three creates, since there is no second pivot player to share the load with.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 32 x 22 m
- **Players:** 3 back-three players plus 1 lone pivot vs 3 opposition pressers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as part of the back three
- **Team sizes:** 4 (possession) v 3 (pressers)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the pivot's pocket zone
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach restarts centrally on any stoppage
- **Coach position:** central, able to see the whole picture
- **Rotation method:** the pivot role rotates every few minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention

Practice walkthrough: Three back-three players build possession against three pressers, with a single pivot player positioned in a central pocket, the team's principal route past the first line of pressure. The pivot's job is to constantly find the correct pocket relative to the pressers' positions, receive on the half-turn, and either progress the ball directly or lay it back with the picture now open.

Rules: The pivot must remain inside the marked pocket zone, adjusting their exact position within it based on the pressers' movement.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the pivot's constant, small positional adjustments and receiving technique are the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* the back three must provide clean, well-timed passes into the pivot's pocket.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- The pivot is genuinely open in the pocket → play the ball in and let them progress or lay it off.
- The pivot is tightly marked → the back three must find an alternative route, echoing this week's broader shape-choice principle.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Receiving on the half-turn and quick decision-making once in possession.
Tactical	Constant, small repositioning to stay in the correct pocket.
Physical	Short, sharp positional adjustments rather than sustained running.
Psychological	Comfort and composure operating as the team's single central outlet, without a second pivot to share the pressure.
Communication & leadership	The pivot calling for the ball clearly and confidently, given their central importance to the

CORNER	POINT
	shape.

Guided discovery questions:

1. How did the pivot's position need to change as the pressers moved?
2. What happened when the pivot was found tightly marked — what was the back three's alternative?
3. Why might a 3-1 shape be more fragile than a 3-2 shape if the lone pivot is well marked?
4. How does this connect to Week 12's pocket-recognition work directly?

Progressions:

1. Add a fourth presser specifically assigned to mark the pivot tightly.
2. Reduce the pocket zone, sharpening the precision required.
3. Add a condition that the pivot must progress the ball forward, not just retain it.

Regressions:

1. Widen the pocket zone for more space.
2. Reduce the opposition to two pressers.
3. Allow the pivot an extra touch to settle before deciding.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The pivot stands still rather than constantly adjusting position	Habit of finding one good spot and staying there	The pivot becomes easy to mark once the pressers adjust	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: demonstrate the constant small repositioning needed	Resume
The back three forces the ball into the pivot even when tightly marked	Over-reliance on the single central option	Passes into the pivot are regularly intercepted	Stop	Short group intervention: "was the pivot really open there?"	Resume

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

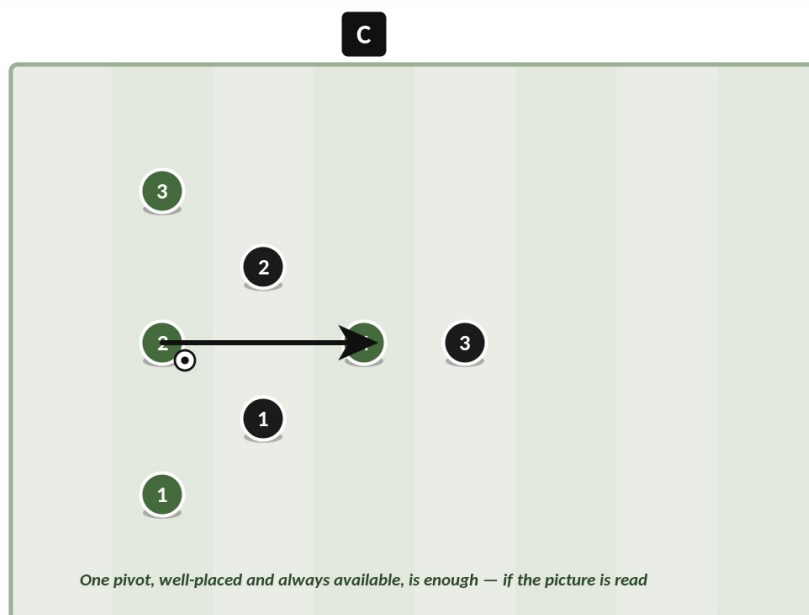
Success indicators:

- The pivot consistently finds and uses the correct pocket.
- Receiving and progression under pressure is clean and composed.
- The back three recognises when the pivot is unavailable and finds an alternative.

Coach's eye: watch the pivot's feet as much as the ball — a player who is constantly making small adjustments, even without touching the ball, is doing the actual job this practice teaches.

H19.2 THE LONE PIVOT — Receiving in a 3-1 Build-Up

32 x 22 m · a single holding midfielder must find and use the pocket a back three creates · 15 minutes



● Back three ● Lone pivot ● Pressers ● Ball ➔ Pass to the pivot

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · Week 19 · Diagrams not to scale

AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 32x22 metre area with dimension labels. Three players in dark green bibs numbered 1-3 arranged in a back-three shape. A fourth player in dark green bibs numbered 4 positioned centrally as the lone pivot. Three players in black bibs numbered 1-3 pressing. White football near a back-three green player. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass into the pivot. Title: 'THE LONE PIVOT — Receiving in a 3-1 Build-Up'. Subtitle: '32 x 22 m · a single holding midfielder must find and use the pocket a back three creates · 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 green-bibbed players in a back-three shape, a fourth green-bibbed player positioned centrally as the lone pivot receiving on the half-turn under pressure from black-bibbed opponents, coach centrally positioned observing the pivot's positioning closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Three players in dark green bibs arranged in a back-three shape. A fourth player in a dark green bib positioned centrally, receiving the ball on the half-turn under pressure from players in black bibs. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the receiving player's positioning. 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 — 3-1 BREAK (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the lone-pivot technical work into a full positional practice against a genuine live press, teaching the whole team to build in the 3-1 shape and progress the ball through the pivot or around the outside as the picture demands.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 building outfield + goalkeeper (in a 3-1 shape) vs 8 pressing
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the building team's goalkeeper participates fully as a genuine passing option alongside the back three
- **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 3-1 shape, with the front players providing width and depth options around the outside. The pressing team applies Weeks 15–16's pressing principles, and the building team is coached to progress either through the lone pivot (when available) or around the outside (when the pivot is marked), applying this week's broader shape-choice principle within a single, leaner structure.

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

Tactical roles: the full lone-pivot skill set from Practice 2, combined with the whole team's positioning and the pressing team's Weeks 15–16 skill set.

Decision-making triggers:

- The pivot is open → progress through the pivot.
- The pivot is tightly marked → progress around the outside instead, echoing Week 6's around-the-press progression.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean receiving and progression, whichever route (through or around) is used.
Tactical	Reading whether the pivot or the outside route is genuinely available.
Physical	Repeated positional adjustments and quick decision-making.
Psychological	Trust in the leaner 3-1 structure, without needing extra bodies to feel secure.
Communication & leadership	The pivot and the back three organising the build-up out loud, continuously.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the team whether to progress through the pivot or around the outside?

2. How did the pressing team try to close off the pivot specifically?
3. What is the risk of relying too heavily on the pivot as the only route through?
4. How does this connect to Week 6's progression-around-pressure principle — is the outside route the same idea applied to this shape?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine attacking direction and target zone once a regain is won.
2. Instruct the pressing team to specifically double up on the pivot, forcing the outside route more often.
3. Reduce the practice area, raising the intensity of both the build-up and the press.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the pressing team's numbers temporarily, simplifying the picture.
2. Widen the practice area for more time.
3. Allow the coach to call out which route (through or around) to use while the picture is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team forces the ball into a tightly marked pivot rather than using the outside route	Over-reliance on the single central option	Passes into the pivot are regularly intercepted despite tight marking	Stop	Short group intervention: "was the pivot really the right option there?"	Resume
The team abandons the pivot entirely, always playing around the outside	Overcorrection after being taught the outside alternative	The pivot is never used even when genuinely open	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was the pivot open there, and did we use them?"	Resume

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

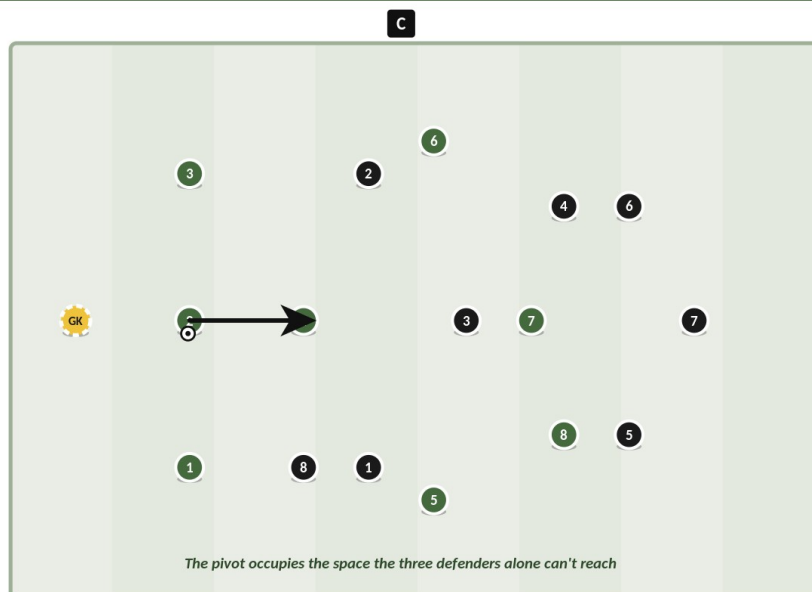
Success indicators:

- The team progresses cleanly through both routes, chosen based on the genuine picture.
- The pivot's positioning and receiving quality remains high under a fuller, live picture.
- The building team's shape holds together — the pivot doesn't become isolated from the back three.

Coach's eye: watch whether the team commits to a genuine decision (through or around) rather than hesitating — a leaner shape like the 3-1 rewards decisiveness more than a shape with extra bodies to fall back on.

H19.3 3-1 BREAK — Build-Up Against a Live Press

50 x 34 m · 8+GK building in a 3-1 shape vs 8 pressing · progress through the pivot or around the outside · 15 minutes



● Building team (3-1 shape) ● Goalkeeper ● Pressing team ● Ball ➔ Progression pass

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · Week 19 · Diagrams not to scale

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. Three players in dark green bibs numbered 1-3 arranged in a back-three shape, one more in dark green bibs numbered 4 positioned centrally as the lone pivot, and four more in dark green bibs numbered 5-8 spread higher and wider. Eight players in black bibs numbered 1-8 pressing. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass into the pivot. Title: '3-1 BREAK — Build-Up Against a Live Press'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m · 8+GK building in a 3-1 shape vs 8 pressing · progress through the pivot or around the outside · 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-three-shaped group in green bibs playing out from their goalkeeper, a single green-bibbed pivot player receiving centrally under pressure, wider green-bibbed players providing outlet options, black-bibbed pressers closing down, 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 dark green bibs organised in a back-three shape, playing out from their goalkeeper. A single player in a dark green bib positioned centrally, receiving the ball under pressure. Wider players in dark green bibs providing outlet options. Players in black bibs closing down the picture. 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 — TRUST THE ONE (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards progression specifically through the lone pivot, reinforcing the week's technical and tactical work inside a genuinely fun context that sends players into the weekend confident.

Organisation:

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

Practice walkthrough: A 7v7 game in which a goal that follows progression through a nominated central pivot player is worth double, directly rewarding this week's central skill.

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

Tactical roles: the full lone-pivot skill set from Practices 2–3, applied inside free-flowing, competitive play.

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

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean receiving and progression through the pivot under game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly identifying when the pivot is genuinely available.
Physical	Moderate, game-based intensity to close the week on a positive note.
Psychological	Confidence and enjoyment — this is the week's designed high point.
Communication & leadership	Team-mates recognising and using the pivot as a genuine attacking outlet.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best pivot-through-the-middle moment work?
2. What's one thing from this week — the 2-3, the 3-2, or the 3-1 — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does trusting a leaner build-up shape matter as much as having more bodies available?

Progressions:

1. Increase the bonus value for a goal that follows a one-touch pass through the pivot.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase central pressure on the pivot.

Regressions:

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

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Team forces play through the pivot even when clearly marked	The condition is chased rather than played naturally	Passes into the pivot are regularly lost	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was the pivot really open there?"	Resume
The pivot is avoided altogether, defeating the purpose of the condition	Caution or lack of confidence after an earlier correction	No attempts to use the pivot even when clearly available	Stop	Short group intervention: "we need to trust this shape again — that's what tonight is for"	Resume

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

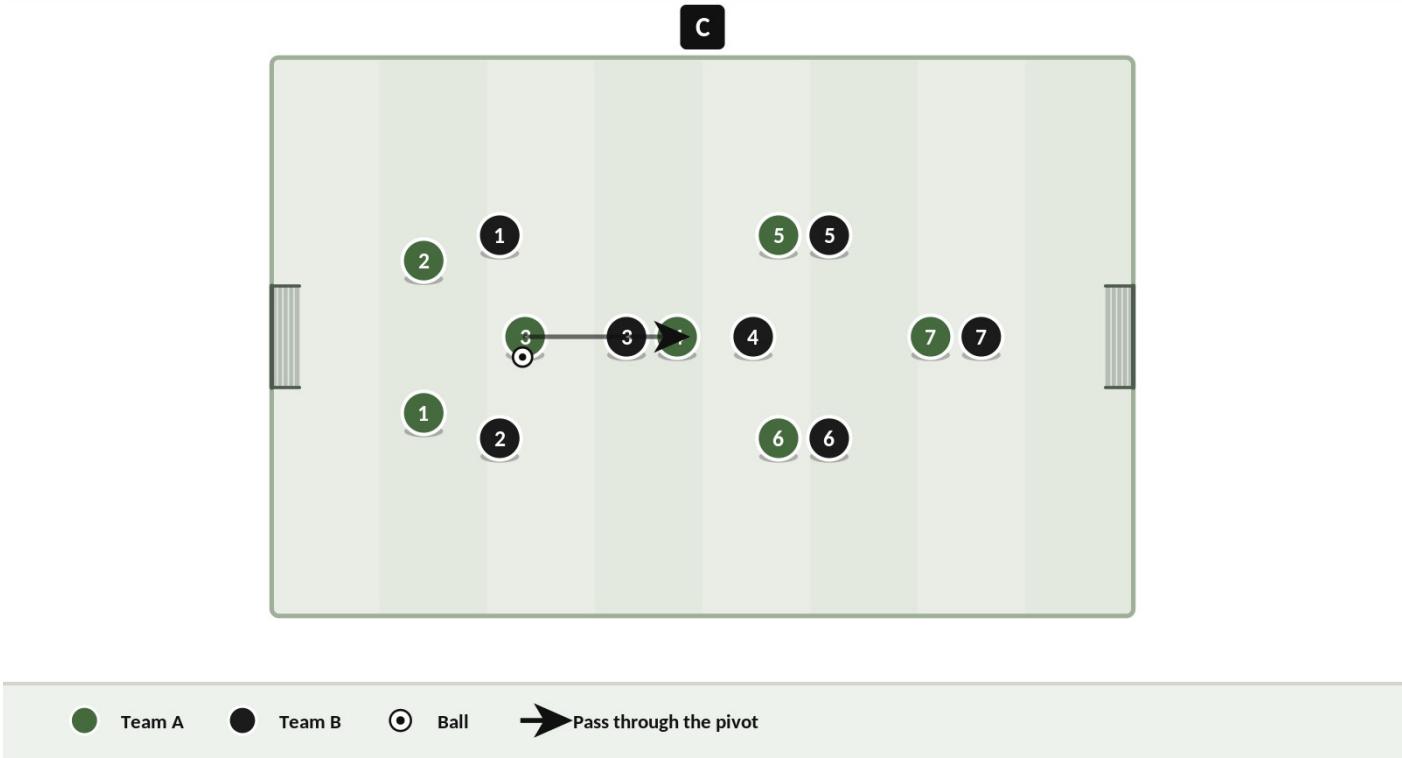
Success indicators:

- Goals following genuine progression through the pivot increase across the practice.
- The pivot is used readily when open, and avoided sensibly when marked.
- 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.

H19.4 TRUST THE ONE — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • a goal following progression through the lone pivot is worth double • 17 minutes



AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x22 metre pitch with a full-size goal at each end. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a pass through a central green player positioned between two black players. Title: 'TRUST THE ONE — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 7v7 · a goal following progression through the lone pivot 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 receiving centrally between two black-bibbed opponents and progressing the ball forward with confidence, team-mates arriving in support, both full-size goals visible, coach on the touchline smiling and encouraging.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 7v7 small-sided football game on a grass pitch with two full-size goals. A player in a dark green bib receiving the ball centrally between two opponents in black bibs and progressing it forward with visible confidence. Team-mates in matching dark green bibs arriving in support. Warm early-evening light, realistic grass pitch and long shadows, amateur adult players of varied build showing visible energy and enjoyment. A coach on the touchline, smiling and encouraging. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

REFLECTION (1 MINUTE)

One question to the group: "Of the three shapes we've worked on this week — 2-3, 3-2, 3-1 — which felt most natural, and which needs more work?"

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Choose the correct build-up shape — 2-3, 3-2, or 3-1 — based on the opponent's genuine press picture.
2. Progress the ball cleanly regardless of which shape is chosen.
3. Maintain rest defence in every shape, not just the most familiar one.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** organise and call the chosen build-up shape clearly.
2. **Midfield unit:** understand their specific job in all three shapes, including the demanding lone-pivot role in a 3-1.
3. **Front players:** provide outlet options appropriate to whichever shape is currently in use.

Individual role reminders:

- Know your specific job in all three build-up shapes, not just the team's most familiar one.
- If you're the lone pivot in a 3-1, keep adjusting your position — stillness makes you easy to mark.
- Commit clearly to a shape rather than drifting indecisively between two.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Number of clean progressions past the first line of pressure, by shape used.
- Whether the build-up shape chosen matched the opponent's actual press numbers.
- Rest defence maintained across all three shapes.
- Number of turnovers specifically caused by an unclear or hesitant shape choice.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Shapes

Alternative build-up shapes (2-3, 3-2, 3-1):

STRUCTURE	HOW EACH SHAPE IS TYPICALLY REACHED	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	WHAT CHANGES	KEY RISK
4-3-3	2-3: two centre-backs plus a holding midfielder and both full-backs. 3-2: a full-back or holding midfielder drops to form a back three, with two central midfielders as the pivot. 3-1: as in 3-2, but one pivot pushes higher, leaving a single holding presence	The recognition-and-choice principle across all three shapes	Which specific player provides each shape's extra body	Committing to the 3-1's leaner structure without a clear read that the pivot will genuinely be available
3-4-3	Naturally close to a 3-2 already; converting to a 3-1 needs only one pivot player to push higher; converting to a 2-3 needs a wide centre-back to step into a fuller midfield line	The recognition-and-choice principle across all three shapes	Less structural change is usually needed to reach the 3-2 and 3-1 shapes specifically	Over-committing the wide centre-back forward when converting to a 2-3, leaving defensive cover short

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.