



## Week 20 — Tactical Adaptability

Tags: `attacking-shape` `defensive-shape` `front-players` `full-squad-practice`

### Weekly Overview

| FIELD                           | DETAIL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week number                     | 20 of 36                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Season phase                    | 4 — Tactical Adaptability                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Core principle                  | Width & depth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Secondary principle             | Overloads & rest defence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Previous match review focus     | Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Weekly tactical problem         | Weeks 18–19 taught the team to change its build-up shape. This week turns to the front of the team: how the number of players occupying the last line changes both what the team can do in possession (one striker holding up play and linking, versus two combining directly) and what it must do out of possession (one striker's cover shadow screening the opponent's pivot, versus two strikers splitting the centre-backs and asking a midfielder to cover the pivot instead).       |
| Formation-neutral explanation   | "One up" or "two up" describes how many players occupy the highest attacking line, not a formation label — a team playing a 4-3-3 can drop into a front two by pushing a wide forward inside, and a team playing a 4-4-2 can present a lone striker by having one forward drop into midfield; the same two attacking and defensive pictures are available to almost any starting formation.                                                                                                |
| Example structural applications | <b>A 4-3-3 team</b> presents a lone striker as its base picture, but can convert to a front two by pushing one wide forward inside and asking a full-back to provide the width instead. <b>A 4-4-2 team</b> presents a front two as its base picture, but can convert to a lone striker by dropping one forward into a genuine midfield role, freeing a central midfielder to push forward instead. Both directions of conversion use this week's same attacking and defensive principles. |

## Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

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**Route A — Previous performance was strong.** If the team played well, check whether the front players' shape (one up or two up) was genuinely suited to the picture in front of them, or whether it was simply the team's habitual choice — 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 front players were repeatedly isolated in possession, or failed to press effectively out of possession, this week answers it directly — open the relevant session with the specific moment from the match.

**Route C — Attendance, facilities or player availability are disrupted.** Both shapes scale to reduced front-player numbers — the underlying principle (width and depth, and coordinated pressing) matters more than rehearsing both shapes at full numbers every week.

## Tuesday — Session 39

| FIELD                                  | DETAIL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Session number                         | 39 of 72                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Week                                   | 20                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Season phase                           | 4 — Tactical Adaptability                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Training day                           | Tuesday                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Session theme                          | One striker vs two: attacking principles                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Short summary                          | Compares the attacking principles a lone striker needs (holding up play, receiving with back to goal, laying off for support arriving late) against the principles a front two needs (direct combination, one coming short while the other spins in behind), then applies the choice inside a full conditioned match. |
| Tags                                   | `attacking-shape` `front-players` `combination-play`                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Primary learning objective             | Front players execute the correct attacking principle for whichever shape (one up or two up) the team is currently using.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Secondary learning objective           | Width and depth are maintained around the front players in both shapes, not just the more familiar one.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Match connection                       | This week's named match-day connection: front players interchange without confusion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Expected tactical outcome              | Cleaner, faster combination play in the final third, regardless of how many players occupy the highest line.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Expected physical load                 | Moderate-high — repeated sharp movement and combination work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 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 goalkeeper distributes to whichever front shape is in use.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 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 zone 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 zones 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>Support the Front</i> | Light green |

| TIME      | DURATION | PHASE                                            | COLOUR CODE |
|-----------|----------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 0:10-0:25 | 15 min   | Technical practice — <i>One Up, Two Up</i>       | Club green  |
| 0:25-0:27 | 2 min    | Water break / transition                         | —           |
| 0:27-0:42 | 15 min   | Skill game — <i>Find the Front</i>               | Dark green  |
| 0:42-0:44 | 2 min    | Water break / transition                         | —           |
| 0:44-0:59 | 15 min   | Conditioned match — <i>Two Systems, One Team</i> | Black       |
| 0:59-1:00 | 1 min    | Reflection                                       | —           |

## PRACTICE 1 — SUPPORT THE FRONT (ARRIVAL)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Introduces the habit of arriving in support of a front player at the correct moment and angle, before any tactical shape is added.

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

**Walkthrough:** One player receives with their back to goal in the centre of the grid; the other three take turns arriving to receive a lay-off, alternating the angle of approach each time.

**Rules:** The receiving player must check their shoulder before the lay-off arrives.

### Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean receiving technique with back to goal, and a well-weighted lay-off.
- *Psychological:* timing the supporting run so it arrives, not anticipates.

## PRACTICE 2 — ONE UP, TWO UP (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Isolates the specific attacking technique each front-player shape demands — a lone striker's hold-up and lay-off play against a front two's direct combination — so players can feel the difference directly before applying it under match pressure.

### Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 44 x 24 m, split into two comparison zones
- **Players:** 3 attackers vs 2 defenders in each zone (6 attackers, 4 defenders total)
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, one per zone, providing the first pass into the front player
- **Team sizes:** 3 v 2 in each zone
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting 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 roles) at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** toward a target end in each zone

**Practice walkthrough:** One zone rehearses the lone-striker picture: a single central attacker receives with back to goal against two defenders, holds off the pressure, and lays the ball off for a support player arriving late. The other zone rehearses the front-two picture: two attackers work directly off each other, one coming short to receive while the other spins in behind off the resulting lay-off, against the same two-defender picture.

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

### Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the lone striker's specific job (hold, shield, lay off) is entirely different from either front-two player's job (combine directly, time the spin).
- *Unit:* the whole group's spacing and support angles change with the shape in use.
- *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, Turn.*

### Coaching points:

| CORNER    | POINT                                                                                                                  |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Technical | Clean receiving, shielding, and lay-off technique specific to each shape.                                              |
| Tactical  | Understanding the different support angles each shape requires.                                                        |
| Physical  | Strength and body positioning to hold off pressure (lone striker) or sharp acceleration to spin in behind (front two). |

| CORNER                     | POINT                                                                  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psychological              | Comfort operating in both shapes, not just the more familiar one.      |
| Communication & leadership | Clear calls for the ball and confirmation of the intended combination. |

#### Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the lone striker need to do with their body that a front-two player didn't need to worry about?
2. What timing detail made the front two's spin-in-behind combination work or fail?
3. Which shape did your group find more comfortable, and why might that not always be the right choice on Saturday?
4. How does this connect to Week 12's player-between-the-lines work — is the lone striker also playing "between the lines" in a sense?

#### Progressions:

1. Add a third defender to each zone, testing whether the shape still holds.
2. Reduce the time allowed for the receiving player to make their decision.
3. Add a condition requiring the combination to end with a shot or a clean break past the defenders.

#### Regressions:

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

#### Common problems and corrections:

| PROBLEM                                                                               | WHY IT HAPPENS                                                | COACH RECOGNISES BY                                            | STOP OR FLOW? | INTERVENTION                                                            | RESTART |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| The lone striker turns into pressure instead of laying the ball off                   | Overconfidence or impatience under the defender's pressure    | The ball is lost in a contested turn rather than played simply | Stop          | Freeze-and-correct: reset and demonstrate the shield-and-lay-off option | Resume  |
| The front two's spinning run arrives too early, arriving before the lay-off is played | Poor timing, anticipating rather than reacting to the lay-off | The runner is offside or has to check back for the ball        | Stop          | Short group intervention: clarify the timing cue for the spinning run   | Resume  |

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

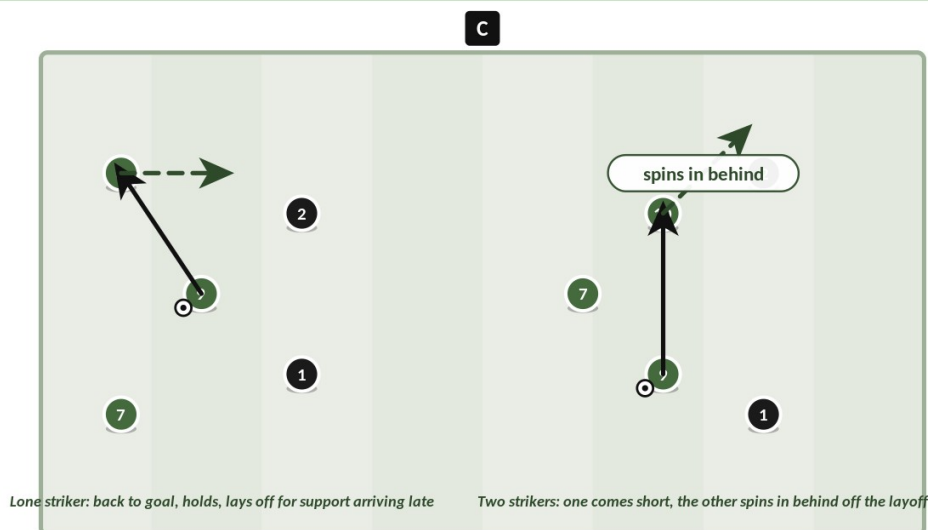
#### Success indicators:

- The lone striker consistently retains possession under pressure and finds the lay-off.
- The front two's combination timing improves across the practice.
- Players can articulate the different jobs each shape requires.

**Coach's eye:** watch the receiving player's first touch and body shape before the ball even arrives — a player who is already shaping to hold or already shaping to combine, before the pass is played, has understood the picture.

## T20.2 ONE UP, TWO UP — Attacking Principles Compared

44 x 24 m • two groups rehearse lone-striker hold-up play and two-striker combination play • 15 minutes



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**AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram):** "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 44x24 metre area split into two zones. Left zone: three players in dark green bibs numbered 7, 8, 9 with the central player receiving with back to goal, two players in black bibs numbered 1-2 defending. Right zone: three players in dark green bibs numbered 7, 9, 10 combining directly, two players in black bibs numbered 1-2 defending. White footballs near a green player in each zone. Black solid arrows showing combination passes, one curved dashed arrow showing a spinning run in the right zone. Title: 'ONE UP, TWO UP — Attacking Principles Compared'. Subtitle: '44 x 24 m • two groups rehearse lone-striker hold-up play and two-striker combination play • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

**Realistic illustration — description:** Elevated wide view of a training pitch divided into two zones, one green-bibbed attacker holding off a defender with back to goal on the left, two green-bibbed attackers combining directly with a spinning run on the right, black-bibbed defenders in each zone, coach moving between the two zones observing both pictures.

**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. On the left, a player in a dark green bib holding off a defender in a black bib with their back to goal, shielding the ball. On the right, two players in dark green bibs combining directly, one making a sharp forward run. A coach moving between the two zones, observing both pictures. 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 — FIND THE FRONT (SKILL GAME)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Moves both attacking pictures into a genuine possession-to-goal game, requiring the team to combine cleanly with whichever front-player shape naturally emerges from the flow of play.

### 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 toward a target end

**Practice walkthrough:** Seven possession players face five opposition players, with two designated front players who may combine as a temporary front two or work as a lone striker with support, depending on how the picture develops. A clean combination that reaches the target end scores a point.

**Rules:** Standard possession-progression rules; the coach notes, without necessarily announcing, which attacking picture the front players are using and how effectively.

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

### Decision-making triggers:

- A front player receives with a defender tight behind them → hold, shield, and look for the lay-off.
- Two front players are both available with space in behind → combine directly, timing the spinning run off the lay-off.

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

### Coaching points:

| CORNER                     | POINT                                                                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Technical                  | Clean execution of whichever attacking picture the moment calls for.              |
| Tactical                   | Genuine, live recognition of which combination the picture allows.                |
| Physical                   | Repeated sharp movement and combination work at match-realistic intensity.        |
| Psychological              | Confidence to commit to a combination rather than hesitating.                     |
| Communication & leadership | Front players and support players confirming their intended combination out loud. |

### Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the front players whether to hold and lay off, or combine directly?
2. What happened when the wrong picture was chosen for the moment?
3. How quickly did support arrive once the front player received the ball?

- How does this connect to Week 14's progression-choice work — is choosing an attacking combination a similar kind of judgement?

#### Progressions:

- Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the decision.
- Add a condition that a goal must follow at least one combination pass involving a front player.
- Add a genuine offside line.

#### Regressions:

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

#### Common problems and corrections:

| PROBLEM                                                                  | WHY IT HAPPENS                                                        | COACH RECOGNISES BY                                          | STOP OR FLOW?                        | INTERVENTION                                             | RESTART |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Front players never combine directly, always looking to hold and lay off | Comfort with the more familiar picture overrides the genuine decision | The front-two combination is available but not used          | Let it flow, then a natural stoppage | Question: "was there a combination on there?"            | Resume  |
| Support arrives too late to make the lay-off useful                      | Poor recognition of when the front player is receiving under pressure | The lay-off is available but no runner has arrived to use it | Stop                                 | Short group intervention: clarify the support-timing cue | Resume  |

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

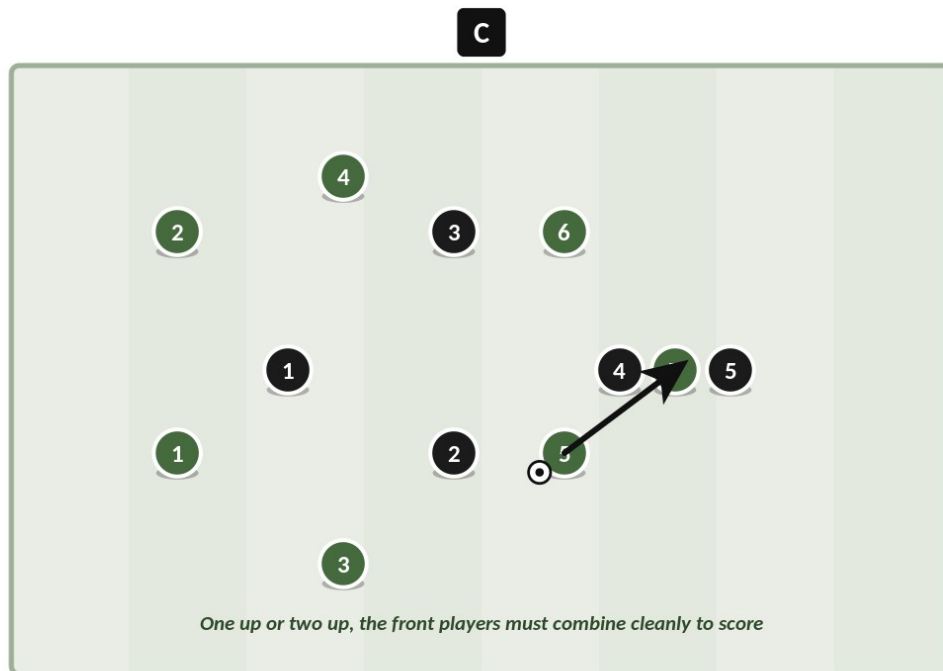
#### Success indicators:

- The team varies its attacking picture based on the genuine moment, not habit.
- Clean combinations reaching the target end increase across the practice.
- Support players arrive at the correct moment to use the front player's work.

**Coach's eye:** watch the moment just after the front player receives the ball — a team that already has a support option arriving is showing more understanding than one that reacts only after the front player is already under pressure.

## T20.3 FIND THE FRONT — Small-Sided Game

34 x 22 m • 7v5 • combine with the front players, however many are up top • 15 minutes



● Possession team    ● Opposition    ⊙ Ball    ➔ Combination 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 and five players in black bibs numbered 1–5 spread across the area. White football near a green player. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a combination pass toward two green players positioned close together near the target end. Title: 'FIND THE FRONT — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v5 • combine with the front players, however many are up top • 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 in possession against five black-bibbed opponents, two green-bibbed front players combining near the target end, coach on the touchline tracking the combination closely.

**AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration):** "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Seven players in dark green bibs in possession against five players in black bibs. Two players in dark green bibs combining closely near the attacking end of the area. A coach on the touchline, closely tracking the combination. 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 — TWO SYSTEMS, ONE TEAM (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, requiring the attacking team to choose between a lone striker or a front two based on the width and depth available, and to execute the correct attacking principle for whichever shape is in use.

### Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role and distribute to whichever front shape is in use

- **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 attacking team may organise its front players as a lone striker or a front two depending on the width and depth available from the rest of the team, applying the full week's attacking principles at match scale.

**Rules:** Standard conditioned-match rules.

**Tactical roles:** the full comparative and decision-making skill set from Practices 2–3, combined for the first time with a genuinely live, moving opponent at match scale.

**Decision-making triggers:** the full set from Practice 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 front-player shape the picture calls for.             |
| Physical                   | The week's peak physical demand — repeated sharp movement combined with match intensity. |
| Psychological              | Composure to commit to a combination rather than hesitating.                             |
| Communication & leadership | Front players and support organising and confirming their picture out loud.              |

### Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team correctly choosing between one striker and two tonight?
2. How did width and depth from the rest of the team change what the front players could do?
3. How does this connect to Week 13's overloads-and-rest-defence work — is choosing a front-player shape a similar kind of team-wide judgement?

#### 4. What did the opposition have to solve once your team settled into each shape?

##### Progressions:

1. Add a genuine offside line.
2. Instruct the opposition to defend with a different shape at each end, testing whether the attacking picture adapts.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

##### Regressions:

1. Instruct the opposition to defend more passively 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 either picture has broken down under full match conditions.

##### Common problems and corrections:

| PROBLEM                                                                               | WHY IT HAPPENS                                                                     | COACH RECOGNISES BY                                                    | STOP OR FLOW?                        | INTERVENTION                                                          | RESTART |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| The team commits to a front two without the width and depth to support it             | The shape decision is made without checking the rest of the team's positioning     | The front two becomes isolated and easily outnumbered                  | Stop                                 | Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle | Resume  |
| The lone striker receives no support because team-mates arrive too late or not at all | The team hasn't recognised the lone striker needs a support player, not just space | The striker is repeatedly forced backward or dispossessed in isolation | Let it flow, then a natural stoppage | Question: "who was supporting the striker there?"                     | Resume  |

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

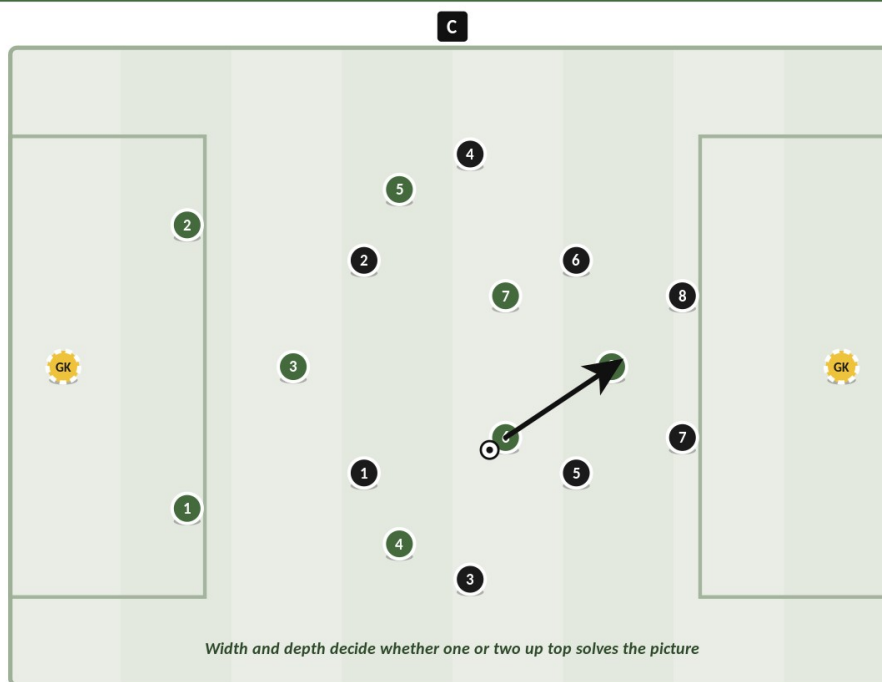
##### Success indicators:

- The team chooses the front-player shape that matches the width and depth available.
- Front players execute the correct attacking principle for whichever shape is used.
- Support arrives at the correct moment in both shapes.

**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 and the support around them, not just whether either shape works in isolation.

## T20.4 TWO SYSTEMS, ONE TEAM — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • play with one striker or two, chosen for width and depth • 15 minutes



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**AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram):** "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing half of a football pitch, 50x36 metres, with penalty box markings at both ends and a full-size goal at each end with a goalkeeper in yellow at each. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch, with two green players positioned close together near the attacking end suggesting a front two. A black solid arrow with an arrowhead showing a combination pass. White football near a green player. Title: 'TWO SYSTEMS, ONE TEAM — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • play with one striker or two, chosen for width and depth • 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, two green-bibbed front players combining near the edge of the penalty box, black-bibbed opponents closing down, 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. Two players in dark green bibs combining near the edge of the penalty area. Players in black bibs closing down the picture. 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: "What decided whether we played with one up top or two tonight, and was that genuinely the right call?"

## Thursday — Session 40

| FIELD                                  | DETAIL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Session number                         | 40 of 72                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Week                                   | 20                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Season phase                           | 4 — Tactical Adaptability                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Training day                           | Thursday                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Session theme                          | One striker vs two: defensive principles                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Short summary                          | Compares the defensive job a lone striker carries — pressing while screening the passing lane into the opponent's pivot with a cover shadow — against a front two's job of splitting the opposition's centre-backs and handing the pivot-screening responsibility to a midfielder instead, then applies both pictures inside a coordinated full-squad press. |
| Tags                                   | `defensive-shape` `front-players` `pressing-triggers`                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Primary learning objective             | Front players execute the correct defensive principle (cover shadow or split press) for whichever shape the team is defending in.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Secondary learning objective           | The press behind the front players is coordinated correctly for whichever shape is in use, not left disconnected.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Match connection                       | This week's named match-day connection: front players interchange without confusion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Expected tactical outcome              | Cleaner, better-timed pressing from the front line, with the opponent's pivot correctly screened or covered in either shape.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Expected physical load                 | Moderate-high — repeated high-intensity pressing actions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 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, building possession for the pressing team to work against.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Pitch dimensions                       | Largest area this week is 50 x 34 m (Practice 3).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Area layout                            | Two side-by-side comparison zones for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Contingency — lower attendance (10-13) | Practice 3 reduces to a 6-player pressing group vs 6 building.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Contingency — higher attendance (20+)  | Practice 3 can extend to a fuller 9v9.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Contingency — restricted space         | Practice 2 works in any space with cones marking the pivot's 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>Screen and Show</i> | Light green |

| TIME      | DURATION | PHASE                                                        | COLOUR CODE |
|-----------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 0:10-0:25 | 15 min   | Technical practice — <i>Cover the Pivot</i>                  | Club green  |
| 0:25-0:27 | 2 min    | Water break / transition                                     | —           |
| 0:27-0:42 | 15 min   | Unit / tactical practice — <i>Press as One, Press as Two</i> | Dark green  |
| 0:42-0:44 | 2 min    | Water break / transition                                     | —           |
| 0:44-0:59 | 15 min   | Confidence game — <i>First Line Wins</i>                     | Black       |
| 0:59-1:00 | 1 min    | Reflection                                                   | —           |

## PRACTICE 1 — SCREEN AND SHOW (ARRIVAL)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Introduces the habit of curving a press to screen a specific passing lane, before any full tactical shape is added.

**Organisation:** 20 x 16 m grid, pairs plus a target player. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully.

**Walkthrough:** One player passes toward a target player while a presser must curve their run to block the passing lane to a second, marked target — rehearsing the cover-shadow shape in isolation before the full practice adds a live picture.

**Rules:** The presser must close down while keeping their body shape between the ball and the marked target.

**Coaching points:**

- *Technical:* body shape and angle of approach while pressing.
- *Psychological:* the discipline of screening a specific lane rather than just closing down the ball.

## PRACTICE 2 — COVER THE PIVOT (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Isolates the specific defensive technique each front-player shape demands — a lone striker's cover shadow screening the pass into the opponent's pivot, against a front two splitting the opposition's centre-backs and asking a midfielder to cover the pivot instead.

### Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 44 x 24 m, split into two comparison zones
- **Players:** 1 lone striker vs 3 building players in the left zone; 2 strikers plus 1 covering midfielder vs 3 building players in the right zone
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as part of the building group in each zone
- **Team sizes:** left zone 1 (press) v 3 (build); right zone 3 (press) v 3 (build)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the pivot's pocket zone in each side
- **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 roles) at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** the pressing group works to force the ball backward or wide

**Practice walkthrough:** In the left zone, a lone striker presses one of two centre-backs while curving their run to keep the pivot in their cover shadow, forcing the building team backward or wide rather than through the middle. In the right zone, two strikers split to press both centre-backs directly, and a covering midfielder takes responsibility for screening the pivot instead, since neither striker alone can cover both jobs.

**Rules:** The pressing side scores a point for forcing the ball backward or wide; the building side scores a point for playing cleanly through the pivot.

### Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the lone striker's cover-shadow technique is entirely different from a front-two player's direct-press technique; the covering midfielder's job in the right zone is new this practice.
- *Unit:* the whole pressing group's coordination changes with the shape in use.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is press-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:** *Press, Cover, Show.*

### Coaching points:

| CORNER        | POINT                                                                         |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Technical     | The curved run and body shape needed to press while screening a passing lane. |
| Tactical      | Understanding which player is responsible for the pivot in each shape.        |
| Physical      | Quick, repeated changes of direction while pressing.                          |
| Psychological | Discipline to screen the correct lane rather than simply chasing the ball.    |

| CORNER                     | POINT                                                                  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communication & leadership | Clear calls confirming who is responsible for the pivot in each shape. |

### Guided discovery questions:

1. What made the lone striker's cover shadow succeed or fail at screening the pivot?
2. Who took responsibility for the pivot in the front-two picture, and how did they know it was their job?
3. Why might a lone striker's press be more demanding, physically, than a front-two player's press?
4. How does this connect to Week 16's collective pressing triggers — is this the same coordination principle applied specifically to the front line?

### Progressions:

1. Add a fourth building player, testing whether the pressing picture still holds.
2. Reduce the time the pressing side has to force the ball backward or wide.
3. Add a condition that the pressing side must win the ball outright, not just force it backward.

### Regressions:

1. Walk each pressing picture through with no live opposition before adding any.
2. Widen each zone for more space and time.
3. Reduce the building side to two players per zone.

### Common problems and corrections:

| PROBLEM                                                                              | WHY IT HAPPENS                                                                     | COACH RECOGNISES BY                          | STOP OR FLOW? | INTERVENTION                                                       | RESTART |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| The lone striker presses the ball directly and loses their cover shadow on the pivot | Instinct to close down the ball overrides the screening job                        | The pivot receives cleanly despite the press | Stop          | Freeze-and-correct: reset and demonstrate the curved run           | Resume  |
| In the front-two picture, no one takes responsibility for the pivot                  | Unclear allocation of the covering job between the midfielder and the two strikers | The pivot is left completely free            | Stop          | Short group intervention: clarify who owns the pivot in this shape | Resume  |

**Coach interventions used in this practice:** heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since precise pressing technique in each distinct shape is the entire teaching point.

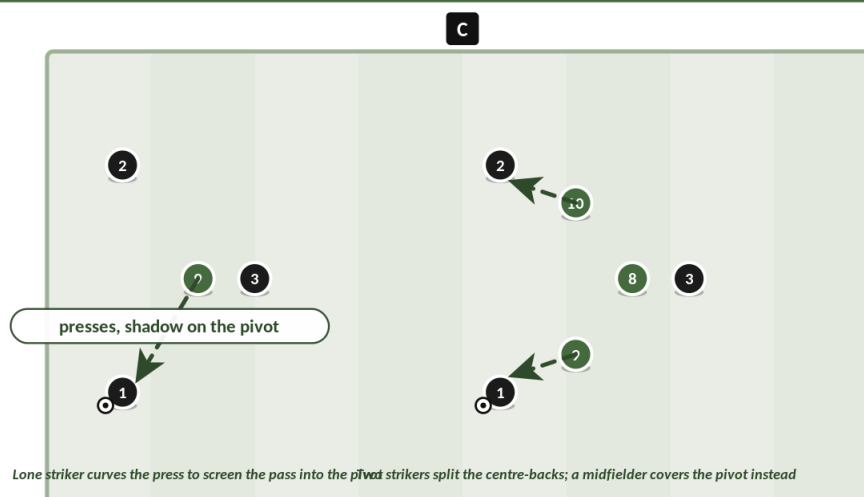
### Success indicators:

- The lone striker consistently screens the pivot while pressing the ball.
- The front-two picture's covering midfielder reliably takes responsibility for the pivot.
- The building side is forced backward or wide more often as the practice progresses.

**Coach's eye:** watch the presser's shoulders and hips, not just their feet — a player whose body shape is already screening the pivot before they arrive at the ball has understood the job.

## H20.2 COVER THE PIVOT — Defensive Principles Compared

44 x 24 m • two groups rehearse a lone striker's cover shadow and a front two splitting the press • 15 minutes



● Defending front players ● Building team ○ Ball → Press / cover shadow → Forced 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: one player in a dark green bib numbered 9 pressing with a curved run, three players in black bibs numbered 1–3 building. Right zone: two players in dark green bibs numbered 9 and 10 pressing two black players directly, one more green player numbered 8 covering a third black player centrally. White footballs near black players in each zone. Curved dashed lines showing the press runs. Title: 'COVER THE PIVOT — Defensive Principles Compared'. Subtitle: '44 x 24 m • two groups rehearse a lone striker's cover shadow and a front two splitting the press • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

**Realistic illustration — description:** Elevated wide view of a training pitch divided into two zones, a single green-bibbed striker curving a press to screen a central black-bibbed player on the left, two green-bibbed strikers pressing directly while a third green-bibbed midfielder covers centrally on the right, coach moving between the two zones observing both pictures.

**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. On the left, a single player in a dark green bib pressing with a curved running line, shielding a central passing lane from a player in a black bib. On the right, two players in dark green bibs pressing two black-bibbed players directly, with a third green-bibbed player covering centrally behind them. A coach moving between the two zones, observing both pictures. 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 AS ONE, PRESS AS TWO (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Expands the front-line comparison into a full coordinated press, teaching the whole team that the front line's shape (one striker or two) sets the trigger and the job for the midfield and back lines behind it, directly building on Weeks 15–16's collective pressing work.

### Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 pressing outfield + goalkeeper vs 8 building
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the pressing team's goalkeeper organises the line from behind, as in Weeks 15–16

- **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 pressing team works to regain; the building team works to progress

**Practice walkthrough:** The pressing team organises with either a lone striker or a front two, and the whole team is coached to recognise that this choice sets off a chain reaction — the lone striker's cover shadow lets the midfield hold a slightly higher line, while the front two's direct press requires a midfielder to drop and cover the pivot, changing the whole team's shape behind it. The building team applies this week's attacking principles from Tuesday, giving the pressing team a genuine, live picture to solve.

**Rules:** Standard positional practice rules; a regain scores a point for the pressing team, a clean progression scores a point for the building team.

**Tactical roles:** the full comparative skill set from Practice 2, combined with the whole team's coordinated pressing structure from Weeks 15–16.

### Decision-making triggers:

- The team presses with a lone striker → the midfield line can push slightly higher, trusting the cover shadow.
- The team presses with a front two → a midfielder must drop to cover the pivot, and the rest of the line adjusts its depth accordingly.

**Communication language used:** *Press, Cover, Show, Squeeze.*

### Coaching points:

| CORNER                     | POINT                                                                                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Technical                  | Clean execution of the pressing and covering roles under a live, moving picture.        |
| Tactical                   | Reading how the front line's shape changes the whole team's pressing structure.         |
| Physical                   | Repeated high-intensity pressing actions across the whole practice.                     |
| Psychological              | Trust in team-mates to fill the correct covering role without being told every time.    |
| Communication & leadership | The front line and the covering midfielder organising the press out loud, continuously. |

### Guided discovery questions:

1. What changed about the midfield and back line's positioning when the front line pressed as one versus as two?
2. Who took responsibility for the pivot each time, and was it always the same player?
3. What is the risk of the whole team failing to adjust when the front line's shape changes?
4. How does this connect to Week 16's pressing-trigger recognition work directly?

### Progressions:

1. Add a genuine attacking direction and target zone once a regain is won.
2. Instruct the building team to specifically attack the pivot, testing whether the covering responsibility holds.
3. Reduce the practice area, raising the intensity of the press.

### Regressions:

1. Reduce the building team's numbers temporarily, simplifying the picture.
2. Widen the practice area for more time.
3. Allow the coach to call out which front-player shape to press with while the coordination is being learned.

### Common problems and corrections:

| PROBLEM                                                                       | WHY IT HAPPENS                                            | COACH RECOGNISES BY                                                     | STOP OR FLOW?                        | INTERVENTION                                                                   | RESTART |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| The midfield line fails to adjust its depth when the front line changes shape | The chain-reaction principle hasn't been fully understood | The team's shape looks disconnected, with gaps between lines            | Stop                                 | Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle          | Resume  |
| Two players both try to cover the pivot, leaving another gap open elsewhere   | Unclear communication about who owns the covering job     | Two green players converge on the same space, leaving another area free | Let it flow, then a natural stoppage | Question: "who was covering the pivot there, and who left their job to do it?" | Resume  |

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

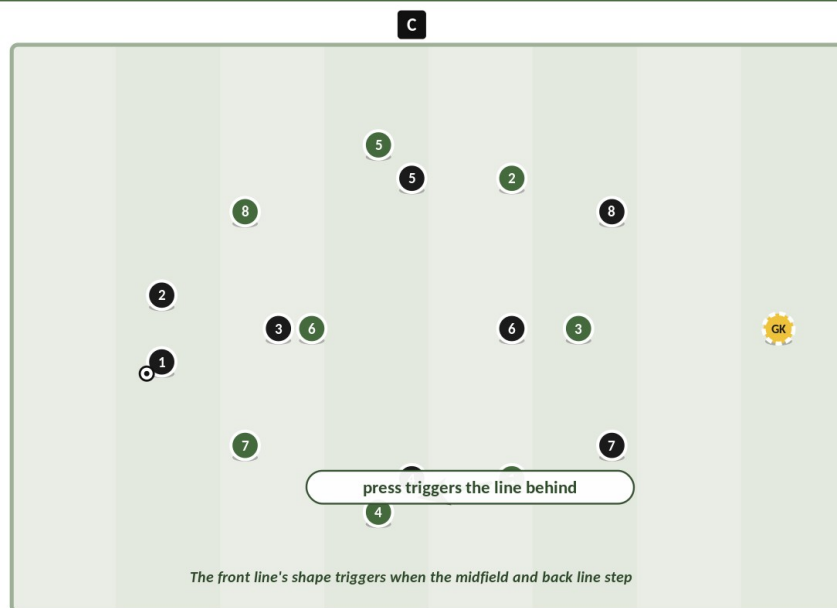
### Success indicators:

- The whole team's shape adjusts correctly when the front line changes between one striker and two.
- The pivot is consistently covered by exactly one player, not zero or two.
- Regains increase as the practice progresses.

**Coach's eye:** watch the team's overall shape, not just the front line — this practice is really testing whether the whole team understands that the front line's choice is a team-wide signal, not an isolated decision.

## H20.3 PRESS AS ONE, PRESS AS TWO — Coordinated Front-Line Press

50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • the front line's press shape (1 or 2 up) sets the midfield and back line's jobs • 15 minutes



● Defending team    ● Building team    ● Goalkeeper    ● Ball    ➔ Press / cover shadow

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**AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram):** "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 50x34 metre area with dimension labels. A goalkeeper in yellow on the right. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1-8 organised in a coordinated pressing shape with the front two players pressing high, and eight players in black bibs numbered 1-8 building. White football near a black player. Curved dashed lines showing press runs from the green front players. Title: 'PRESS AS ONE, PRESS AS TWO — Coordinated Front-Line Press'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • the front line's press shape (1 or 2 up) sets the midfield and back line's jobs • 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 green-bibbed pressing team organised with a coordinated front line and midfield shape, black-bibbed players trying to build out under pressure, 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 coordinated pressing shape, with the front players closing down and midfielders positioned to cover behind them. Players in black bibs trying to build out under pressure. 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 — FIRST LINE WINS (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

**Tactical purpose:** Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards regains won specifically through the front players' press or cover shadow, 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 regain won by a designated front player, either by winning the ball directly or by forcing a mistake through a correctly executed cover shadow, is worth a bonus point, directly rewarding this week's central defensive skill.

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

**Tactical roles:** the full front-line pressing 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 pressing and cover-shadow technique under game-realistic conditions.      |
| Tactical                   | Correctly identifying when to press directly and when to screen a lane instead. |
| 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 rewarding the front players' defensive work.         |

### Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best front-line regain work?
2. What's one thing from this week — the attacking or defensive picture — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does the front line's defensive work matter as much as its attacking work?

### Progressions:

1. Increase the bonus value for a regain won specifically through a cover shadow rather than a direct tackle.
2. Add a genuine offside line.

3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase pressure on the front players.

#### Regressions:

1. Allow any regain to count 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 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Front players chase the ball everywhere, abandoning their positional job for the bonus | The condition is chased rather than played within the correct defensive shape | The front line loses its shape, leaving gaps behind                      | Stop                                 | Short group intervention: "the bonus rewards good pressing, not chasing" | Resume  |
| Front players hang back, avoiding the pressing job altogether                          | Caution or lack of confidence after an earlier correction                     | No pressing actions attempted even when the picture clearly calls for it | Let it flow, then a natural stoppage | Question: "was there a press on there?"                                  | 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.

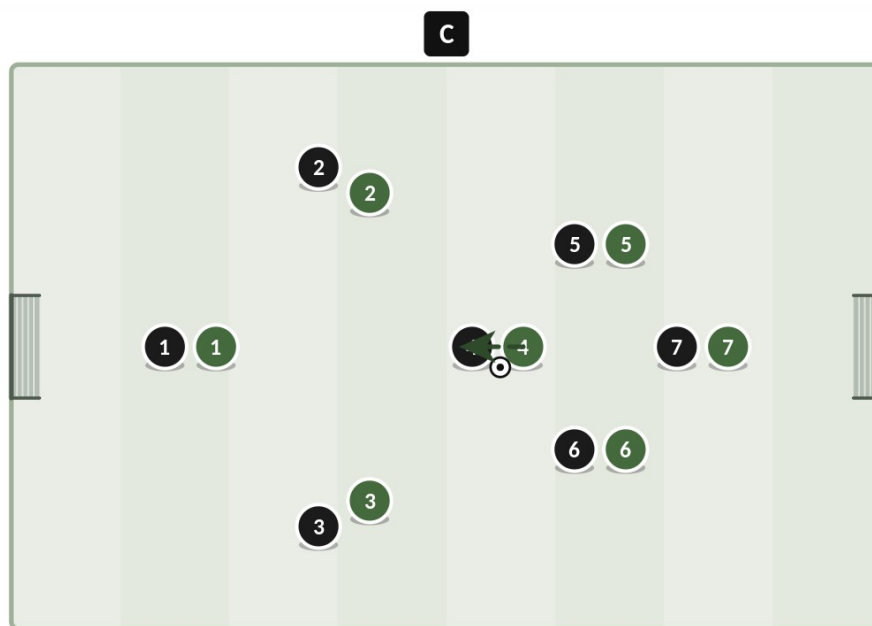
#### Success indicators:

- Regains following genuine front-line pressing work increase across the practice.
- The front line presses when the picture calls for it and holds its cover shadow sensibly otherwise.
- 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.

## H20.4 FIRST LINE WINS — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • bonus for a regain won by the front players' press or cover shadow • 17 minutes



● Team A ● Team B ● Ball → Press / cover shadow

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**AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram):** "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x22 metre pitch with a full-size goal at each end. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. A curved dashed line showing a press run from a green player toward a black player. Title: 'FIRST LINE WINS — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v7 • bonus for a regain won by the front players' press or cover shadow • 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 front player winning the ball cleanly from a black-bibbed opponent near the halfway line, 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 winning the ball cleanly from an opponent in a black bib near the halfway line. 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: "Whichever shape we press in on Saturday, who owns the pivot — and does everyone know it's their job?"

# Match-Day Objectives

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## Three team objectives:

1. Choose the correct front-player shape — one striker or two — based on the width and depth available in possession, and coordinate the press correctly for whichever shape is used out of possession.
2. Execute the correct attacking principle (hold-up and lay-off, or direct combination) for whichever shape is in use.
3. Ensure the opponent's pivot is covered by exactly one player at all times, whichever defensive shape is used.

## Three unit objectives:

1. **Front players:** know your specific attacking and defensive job in both the lone-striker and front-two pictures.
2. **Midfield unit:** be ready to cover the pivot when the front line presses as two, and to push slightly higher when the front line presses as one.
3. **Back line and goalkeeper:** provide the width and depth that allows the front players to combine cleanly, whichever shape is chosen.

## Individual role reminders:

- If you're playing as a lone striker, hold the ball up and trust support to arrive — don't force a turn into pressure.
- If you're playing as part of a front two, time your spinning run off the lay-off, not before it.
- Whoever is closest to the opponent's pivot when the front line presses as two: that's your job, every time.

## Measurable performance indicators:

- Number of clean combinations completed by the front players, by shape used.
- Number of regains won specifically through front-line pressing or cover shadow.
- Whether the opponent's pivot was left free at any point, and by which shape.
- Whether the front-player shape chosen matched the width and depth genuinely available.

## Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

### One striker vs two: attacking and defensive principles

| STRUCTURE | HOW THE LONE-STRIKER PICTURE IS TYPICALLY REACHED                                            | HOW THE FRONT-TWO PICTURE IS TYPICALLY REACHED                      | WHAT STAYS THE SAME                                                  | KEY RISK                                                                                                    |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4-3-3     | Base picture — one central striker, two wide forwards providing width                        | One wide forward pushes inside, a full-back provides width instead  | The attacking and defensive principles for whichever shape is in use | Converting to a front two without replacing the width the wide forward previously provided                  |
| 4-4-2     | One forward drops into a genuine midfield role, freeing a central midfielder to push forward | Base picture — two central strikers, wide midfielders provide width | The attacking and defensive principles for whichever shape is in use | Converting to a lone striker without clarifying who now covers the dropped forward's previous defensive job |

## Coach Review

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*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.*