



Week 21 — Tactical Adaptability

Tags: `pressing` `low-block` `defensive-choice` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	21 of 36
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Core principle	Collective pressing triggers
Secondary principle	Protect the centre, then the box
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Weeks 15–16 built a genuine, coordinated press. Week 21 adds the layer above it: the team must now choose, based on the scoreline, the opponent, and the picture in front of them, whether to defend with a high press or to hold a mid-block and wait for the trigger to arrive. Thursday then goes a level lower still, teaching the specific organisation a low block needs when the team chooses — or is forced — to defend deeper: protect the centre first, and only concede the box as a last resort.
Formation-neutral explanation	"High press," "mid-block," and "low block" describe how far up the pitch a team's defensive structure starts, not a formation — any team, in any formation, can choose any of the three depending on the game state, and the choice is a collective, coached decision rather than a fixed identity.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 team can press high with its front three engaging the opposition's back line directly, or drop into a mid-block with the front three screening passing lanes rather than chasing the ball, or a low block with all ten outfield players behind the ball near their own box. A 3-4-3 team presses high with its front three and wing-backs stepping together, but its low block relies more heavily on the back three's compactness centrally, since it has one fewer natural wide defender than a back four. The choice of block height is available to both structures; what changes is which players carry the heaviest defensive load in each block.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, check whether the block height chosen (high press or mid-block) was a genuine, collective decision, or simply the team's habitual choice regardless of the scoreline — 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 pressed high when a mid-block was needed, or sat too deep when a press was available, 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 block heights scale to reduced numbers — the underlying decision-making skill (reading the scoreline and picture, then choosing) matters more than rehearsing every block at full numbers every week.

Tuesday — Session 41

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	41 of 72
Week	21
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	High press vs mid-block: choosing
Short summary	Compares a high press's starting position and triggers against a mid-block's starting position and triggers, then asks the team to choose between them based on a coached scenario — scoreline, time remaining, opponent threat — before applying the decision inside a full conditioned match.
Tags	`pressing` `defensive-choice` `game-management`
Primary learning objective	The team can organise cleanly in either a high press or a mid-block, choosing between them based on the game scenario rather than habit.
Secondary learning objective	The chosen block's specific pressing trigger is recognised and acted on collectively, not by individuals in isolation.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: the team defends in more than one block by choice.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer turnovers caused by an unclear or mismatched block height for the game situation.
Expected physical load	High — this is the week's named high-intensity press-bout theme.
Recommended intensity	8-9 / 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 organises the line and helps confirm the chosen block height.
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 6v5; 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>Read the Cue</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Two Blocks, One Trigger</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Read and React</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Choose the Block</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — READ THE CUE (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of reacting instantly to a called scenario, before any tactical block structure is added.

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

Walkthrough: Players jog freely; the coach calls either "press" (sprint to touch a marker) or "hold" (freeze in a low, ready position), rehearsing the instant recognition and reaction this week's decision-making depends on.

Rules: React within one second of the call.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* explosive first step on the "press" call.
- *Psychological:* instant, unhesitating recognition of the called scenario.

PRACTICE 2 — TWO BLOCKS, ONE TRIGGER (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces both block heights side by side, so players can feel directly the different starting positions and pressing triggers each one requires against the same opposition picture.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 46 x 26 m, split into two comparison zones
- **Players:** 3 defenders vs 3 building players in each zone (6 defenders, 6 building players total)
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, one per zone, as part of the building group
- **Team sizes:** 3 v 3 in each zone
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking each block's reference line
- **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 block heights) at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** the defending group works to press or force the building group backward or wide

Practice walkthrough: One zone rehearses the high press: the defending group's reference line sits close to the building group, and the trigger is immediate — engage the moment the ball is played short or square. The other zone rehearses the mid-block: the defending group's reference line sits further back, and the trigger only fires once the ball enters a marked zone in front of the block. Both groups face an identical three-player building picture, so the only variable is the block height and its trigger.

Rules: Standard pressing-and-forcing rules in each zone; groups swap block heights at the midpoint so everyone experiences both.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* each defender's specific starting position and trigger differ between the two blocks.
- *Unit:* the whole group's compactness and distance between lines changes with the block.
- *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, Hold, Show.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean pressing technique specific to each block's starting distance.
Tactical	Understanding which trigger applies to which block.
Physical	Explosive pressing actions in the high-press zone; disciplined positional holding in the mid-block zone.

CORNER	POINT
Psychological	Comfort operating in both blocks, not just the more familiar one.
Communication & leadership	Players confirming which block and trigger the group is currently using.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was different about the moment the press was triggered in each zone?
2. Which block did your group find more comfortable, and why might that not always be the right choice?
3. How did each player's individual starting position change between the two blocks?
4. How does this connect to Week 16's collective pressing triggers — is this the same idea applied to two different starting heights?

Progressions:

1. Add a fourth building player to each zone, testing whether the block still holds.
2. Reduce the time allowed to reorganise into each block.
3. Add a condition requiring the defending group to win the ball outright, not just force it backward.

Regressions:

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

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The defending group in the mid-block zone presses too early, before the trigger has actually arrived	Habit of pressing on sight rather than waiting for the trigger	The press is triggered before the ball enters the marked zone	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify the trigger cue	Resume
The defending group in the high-press zone hesitates, allowing the building group time to settle	Uncertainty about the immediacy the high press requires	The press arrives a beat too late, after the building group has already found a passing lane	Stop	Short group intervention: "the trigger there is the pass itself — go on it"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since precise trigger recognition in two distinct blocks is the entire teaching point.

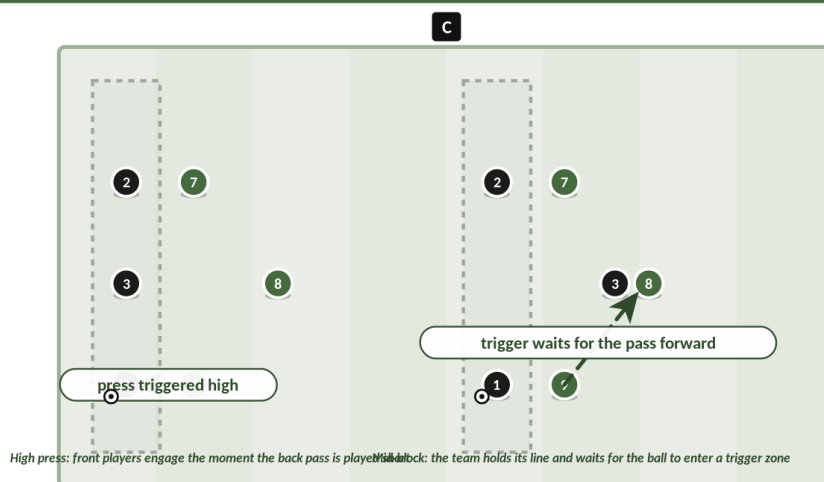
Success indicators:

- Both groups can organise cleanly in either block by the end of the practice.
- Players can state the correct trigger for whichever block they're in.
- The press is neither early nor late relative to the correct trigger.

Coach's eye: watch the moment just before the press is triggered — a player who is already shifting their weight forward on the correct cue has internalised the block's trigger; a player who reacts only after the ball has already moved has not.

T21.2 TWO BLOCKS, ONE TRIGGER — High Press vs Mid-Block Compared

46 x 26 m · two groups rehearse a high press start point and a mid-block start point, same trigger picture · 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 46x26 metre area split into two zones, each with a dashed reference line. Left zone: three players in dark green bibs numbered 7, 8, 9 positioned close to three players in black bibs numbered 1–3, pressing immediately. Right zone: three players in dark green bibs numbered 7, 8, 9 positioned further back from three players in black bibs numbered 1–3, holding a mid-block line. White footballs near black players in each zone. Curved dashed lines showing press triggers. Title: 'TWO BLOCKS, ONE TRIGGER — High Press vs Mid-Block Compared'. Subtitle: '46 x 26 m · two groups rehearse a high press start point and a mid-block start point, same trigger 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 pressing tightly and immediately on the left, a second group of green-bibbed players holding a deeper, patient line on the right, black-bibbed building players 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, players in dark green bibs pressing tightly and immediately against players in black bibs. On the right, players in dark green bibs holding a deeper, organised line, patiently waiting before engaging players in black bibs. 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 — READ AND REACT (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the block-height decision into a genuine possession game against a real opposition group, with the coach calling a game scenario that requires the defending team to choose live between a high press and a mid-block.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 7 building players vs 6 defenders
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 6
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers, 6 cones, a mid-block reference zone marked centrally
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** nearest sideline
- **Coach position:** sideline, central, calling scenarios
- **Rotation method:** groups swap every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** the defending team works to regain or force the ball backward

Practice walkthrough: Seven building players face six defenders, and the coach periodically calls a scenario ("1-0 up, ten minutes left" or "1-0 down, need a goal") that the defending team must translate into the correct block height and trigger, without being told explicitly which block to use.

Rules: Standard possession-and-regain rules; the coach notes, without necessarily announcing, whether the defending team's chosen block matches the called scenario.

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 scenario favours protecting a lead or managing the game → mid-block, patient trigger.
- The scenario demands winning the ball back quickly → high press, immediate trigger.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean execution in whichever block is chosen.
Tactical	Genuine, live translation of a game scenario into the correct block height.
Physical	High-intensity pressing actions when the high press is chosen.
Psychological	Confidence to commit to a block rather than hesitating between two options.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and confirming which block it's currently using.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the team which block was the better choice for the called scenario?
2. What happened when the wrong block was chosen for the scenario?
3. How quickly did the team reorganise once a new scenario was called?

- How does this connect to Week 18's mid-match structural-change work — is choosing a block height a similar kind of live decision?

Progressions:

- Call scenarios more frequently, testing how quickly the team reorganises.
- Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the decision.
- Add a genuine offside line.

Regressions:

- Allow the coach to name the recommended block directly while the decision-making skill is being built.
- Widen the practice area for more time and space.
- Reduce to 6v5 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 block regardless of the scenario called	Comfort with the more familiar block overrides the genuine decision	The same block is used even when the scenario clearly favours the other	Stop	Short group intervention: "does this scenario actually call for that block?"	Resume
The team is slow to reorganise after a new scenario is called	Genuine cognitive demand of translating a scenario into a defensive picture	The old block persists for several phases after the new call	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what did that scenario call for, and did we deliver it?"	Resume

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

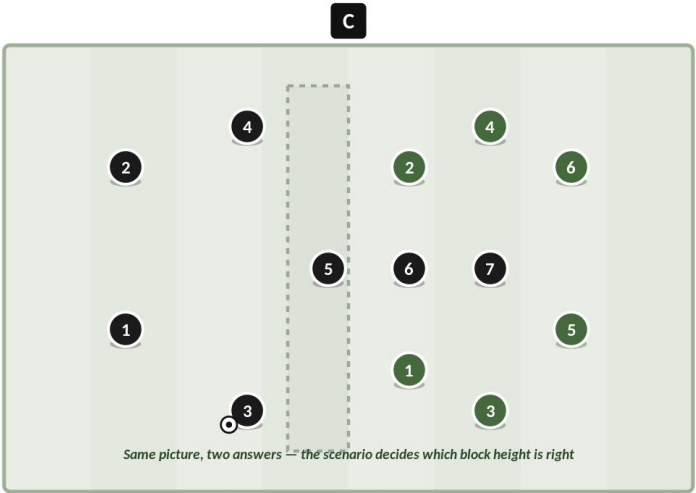
Success indicators:

- The team's chosen block matches the called scenario with increasing accuracy.
- Reorganisation between blocks happens more quickly across the practice.
- The team commits clearly to whichever block it chooses.

Coach's eye: watch for the moment of commitment immediately after a new scenario is called — a team that reorganises decisively is showing more understanding than one that drifts between blocks.

T21.3 READ AND REACT — Small-Sided Game

34 x 22 m • 7v6 • the coach calls the scenario, the defending team chooses to press high or hold a mid-block • 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Building team ⊙ Ball ▬ Mid-block reference line

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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 and a dashed mid-block reference line across the centre. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6 and seven players in black bibs numbered 1–7 spread across the area. White football near a black player. Title: 'READ AND REACT — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v6 • the coach calls the scenario, the defending team chooses to press high or hold a mid-block • 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, six green-bibbed defenders reorganising their line in response to a shouted instruction from the coach, seven black-bibbed players in possession, coach on the touchline mid-call with an animated, communicating posture.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Six players in dark green bibs reorganising their defensive line in response to an instruction. Seven players in black bibs in possession of the ball. A coach on the touchline, animated, mid-call with an arm raised, clearly communicating a scenario to the team. 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 — CHOOSE THE BLOCK (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, requiring the defending team to choose between a high press and a mid-block based on a coach-called scoreline scenario, and to execute the correct trigger for whichever block is chosen.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the defending team's goalkeeper helps organise and confirm the chosen block

- **Team sizes:** 8 v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 8 flat markers, corner cones
- **Starting positions:** standard match shape
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** match-realistic restarts
- **Coach position:** touchline, halfway line, mobile, calling scenarios
- **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 coach periodically calls a scoreline scenario, and the defending team must organise into the correct block height and execute its trigger, 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 live, moving 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 block is chosen.
Tactical	Genuine, live translation of the called scenario into the correct block and trigger.
Physical	The week's peak physical demand — repeated high-intensity press bouts combined with match intensity.
Psychological	Composure to commit to a block rather than hesitating.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and confirming its chosen block out loud.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team correctly choosing between the high press and the mid-block tonight?
2. How did the team's distance between lines differ between the two blocks when they were used?
3. How does this connect to Week 15's compactness work — is holding the correct distance between lines just as important in a mid-block as it is in a high press?

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

Progressions:

1. Call scenarios more frequently or with less warning.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

1. Call scenarios less frequently 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 block has broken down under full match conditions.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team is slow to translate a called scenario into the correct block	Genuine cognitive demand of a live, changing scenario	The wrong block persists for several phases before adjusting	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The high press is chosen but not sustained, dropping off after the first wave	Physical fatigue or lack of collective commitment	The press engages once, then the team drops off without regaining organisation	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that a genuine press, or one wave of it?"	Resume

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

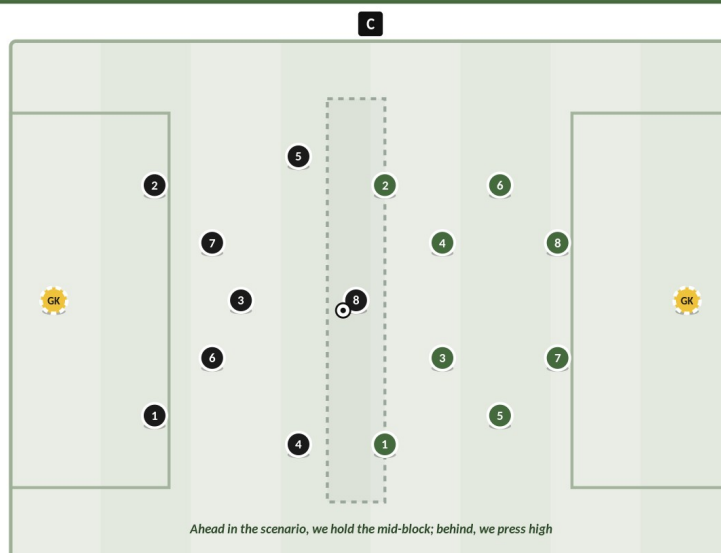
Success indicators:

- The team translates called scenarios into the correct block with increasing accuracy.
- The chosen block's trigger is executed cleanly and collectively.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, which block 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 blocks, not just whether either block works in isolation.

T21.4 CHOOSE THE BLOCK — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • defend with a high press or a mid-block based on a coach-called scoreline scenario • 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Building team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ■ Mid-block line

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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. A dashed mid-block reference line runs across the pitch. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch. White football near a black player. Title: 'CHOOSE THE BLOCK — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • defend with a high press or a mid-block based on a coach-called scoreline scenario • 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 defensive block, a black-bibbed player in possession under pressure, coach on the touchline near halfway mid-call, communicating a scenario to the team.

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, coordinated defensive block. A player in a black bib in possession under pressure. A coach stands near the halfway line on the touchline, animated, mid-call, communicating a scenario to the team. 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 scenario would tell us to press high on Saturday, and what scenario would tell us to hold a mid-block instead?"

Thursday — Session 42

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	42 of 72
Week	21
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Low block organisation
Short summary	Teaches the specific organisation a low block needs — jockeying and delaying to funnel play away from central areas, and a compact defensive shape that protects the centre first, conceding width before it ever concedes the middle or the box.
Tags	`low-block` `compactness` `delaying`
Primary learning objective	The team defends a low block with the centre protected first, funnelling attackers into wider, less dangerous areas.
Secondary learning objective	Individual jockeying and delaying technique buys the time the low block needs to get compact and organised.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: the team defends in more than one block by choice.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer clean central entries into the box when the team is forced to defend deep.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high — repeated short, sharp defensive 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; the defending goalkeeper organises the low block from behind, as in Weeks 15–16's block-shifting work.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 44 x 30 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 defending 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 central protected zone; 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>Jockey and Delay</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Show</i>	Club green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
		<i>Them Wide</i>	
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Hold the Box</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Backs to the Wall</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — JOCKEY AND DELAY (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the individual jockeying technique a low block depends on — staying goal-side, delaying without diving in, before any full tactical shape is added.

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

Walkthrough: Paired jockeying, one player dribbling within a marked zone while the other shadows them, staying low and balanced, delaying rather than attempting a tackle.

Rules: The defending player may not attempt a tackle for the first 20 seconds of each turn — jockeying and delaying only.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* low, balanced body position while jockeying.
- *Psychological:* patience — resisting the urge to dive in early.

PRACTICE 2 — SHOW THEM WIDE (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific jockeying and funnelling technique that protects the centre first, showing the attacker into wider, less dangerous areas rather than allowing a central route through.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 30 x 20 m
- **Players:** 1v1 progressing to 2v2
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as defenders
- **Team sizes:** 1v1 and 2v2
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking a central protected zone
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 2 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach restarts on any stoppage
- **Coach position:** central, able to see the whole picture
- **Rotation method:** pairs rotate every few minutes
- **Direction of play:** the attacker works to break through centrally; the defender

works to show them wide

Practice walkthrough: A defender jockeys an attacker in a marked central zone, angling their body shape to close the central passing or dribbling lane while deliberately leaving the wider channel more open, funnelling the attacker away from goal rather than toward it. The practice progresses to 2v2, adding a covering defender who protects the space behind the first defender's shown-wide angle.

Rules: The attacker scores by breaking through the central zone; the defender succeeds by showing the attacker into the wide channel and delaying them there.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the jockeying defender's body shape and angle of approach are the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* in the 2v2 progression, the covering defender's positioning relative to the first defender becomes important.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is defence-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- The attacker is central → show them wide, protecting the middle.
- The attacker has already been shown wide → delay, allowing cover to arrive rather than diving in.

Communication language used: *Show, Delay, Cover.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Jockeying body shape and angle of approach.
Tactical	Understanding why the centre is protected first, before the wide areas.
Physical	Short, sharp lateral movement while maintaining balance.
Psychological	Patience and discipline — delaying rather than diving in.
Communication & leadership	The covering defender calling their position clearly in the 2v2 progression.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the defender's body shape need to do to show the attacker wide rather than centrally?
2. What happened when the defender dived in early instead of delaying?
3. Why is the centre protected first, ahead of the wide areas?
4. How does this connect to Week 15's compactness work — is showing an attacker wide also about protecting the team's overall shape?

Progressions:

1. Add a second attacker, testing whether the defending pair maintains the central protection.
2. Reduce the central protected zone, sharpening the precision required.
3. Add a condition that the defender must delay for a set count before any tackle is attempted.

Regressions:

1. Widen the central protected zone for more margin.
2. Reduce to a passive attacker who walks through the practice at first.
3. Allow the defender an extra second before the attacker is live.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The defender dives in for a tackle rather than delaying	Impatience or discomfort jockeying under pressure	The tackle is attempted early and often missed, beating the defender	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and demonstrate the patient jockeying position	Resume
The defender's body shape doesn't actually close the central lane	Misunderstanding of the correct angle needed to show the attacker wide	The attacker breaks through centrally despite the defender's proximity	Stop	Short group intervention: demonstrate the correct angle of approach	Resume

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

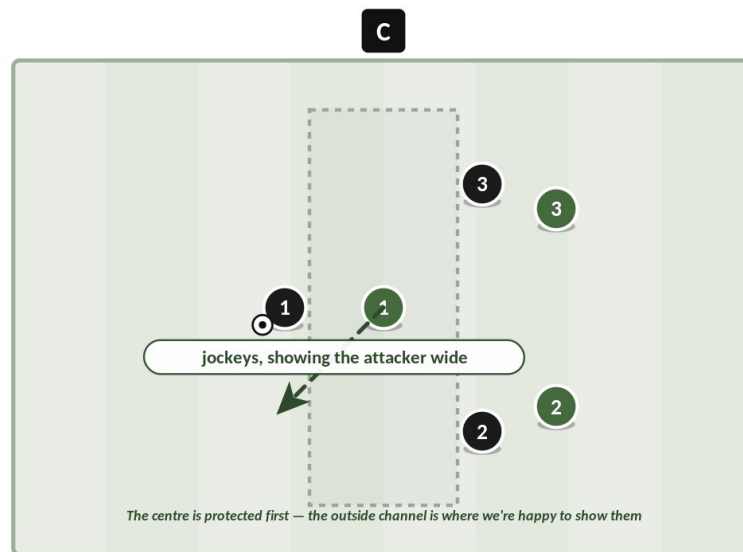
Success indicators:

- The defender consistently shows the attacker into the wide channel, not centrally.
- Delaying, rather than diving in, becomes the default response.
- In the 2v2 progression, the covering defender's positioning protects the space behind the first defender.

Coach's eye: watch the defender's hips and shoulders, not their feet — a defender whose body shape is already angled to protect the centre, before the attacker even moves, has understood the job.

H21.2 SHOW THEM WIDE — Jockey and Delay

30 x 20 m • 1v1 and 2v2 • funnel the attacker away from the centre, protecting the middle first • 15 minutes



● Defenders ● Attackers ● Ball ➔ Show outside, protect the centre

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 21 • 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 30x20 metre area with dimension labels and a dashed central protected zone. One player in a dark green bib numbered 1 jockeying a player in a black bib numbered 1, body angled to show the attacker wide. A second pair, two green players numbered 2 and 3 against two black players numbered 2 and 3, shown further along the area. White football near a black player. A curved dashed line showing the jockeying angle. Title: 'SHOW THEM WIDE — Jockey and Delay'. Subtitle: '30 x 20 m • 1v1 and 2v2 • funnel the attacker away from the centre, protecting the middle first • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training area, a green-bibbed defender jockeying a black-bibbed attacker with a clear, angled body shape showing the attacker toward the sideline, a second pair working through the same picture nearby, coach centrally positioned observing the jockeying angle closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. A player in a dark green bib jockeying a player in a black bib, body clearly angled to show the attacker toward the sideline and away from the centre. A second pair working through the same picture nearby. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the defender's body shape and angle. 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 — HOLD THE BOX (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the individual jockeying work into a full team low-block organisation, teaching the whole team to stay compact centrally first, conceding width before the middle or the box, directly building on Week 15's compactness principle.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 44 x 30 m
- **Players:** 8 defending outfield + goalkeeper vs 8 building
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the defending team's goalkeeper organises the low block

from behind, calling adjustments as the ball moves

- **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 break through centrally or find

space in the box; the defending team works to stay compact and clear

Practice walkthrough: Eight defenders organise in a compact low block near their own box, applying Practice 2's individual jockeying work collectively — the block stays narrow and central first, conceding the wide channels while protecting the middle and the space in front of goal. The building team is coached to test the block by probing both centrally and wide, giving the defending team a genuine, live picture to organise against.

Rules: Standard positional practice rules; a clean clearance or regain scores a point for the defending team, a clean central entry into the box scores a point for the building team.

Tactical roles: the full jockeying skill set from Practice 2, combined with the whole team's compact, coordinated low-block shape.

Decision-making triggers:

- The ball is central → the block stays narrow and compact, protecting the middle above all else.
- The ball is wide → the block shifts across but does not overcommit centrally, since the width is the area the team is willing to concede.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean jockeying, delaying, and clearing technique under a live, moving picture.
Tactical	Reading when to stay compact centrally and when to shift across for a wide ball.
Physical	Repeated short, sharp defensive actions under sustained pressure.
Psychological	Discipline to protect the centre even when the ball is temporarily wide.
Communication & leadership	The goalkeeper and back line organising the block's shape out loud, continuously.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What happened to the block's shape when the ball moved from central to wide, and back again?
2. What is the risk of the block collapsing narrow too aggressively, even when the ball is central?
3. How did the goalkeeper's calls help organise the block?
4. How does this connect to Week 15's compactness work directly — is a low block simply compactness applied at its deepest starting position?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine attacking direction and target zone once a regain or clearance is won.
2. Instruct the building team to specifically test the centre repeatedly, checking whether the block holds.
3. Reduce the practice area, raising the intensity of the defending picture.

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 "show wide" or "hold central" while the organisation is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The block overcommits to the wide ball, opening a central gap	Instinct to close down the ball overrides the discipline to protect the centre	A central gap opens as several defenders are drawn toward the wide ball	Stop	Short group intervention: "who stayed to protect the middle there?"	Resume
The block sits too deep too early, inviting unnecessary pressure onto the box	Overcaution, dropping off before genuinely needed	The defending line retreats well before any real central threat exists	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did we need to drop that deep there?"	Resume

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

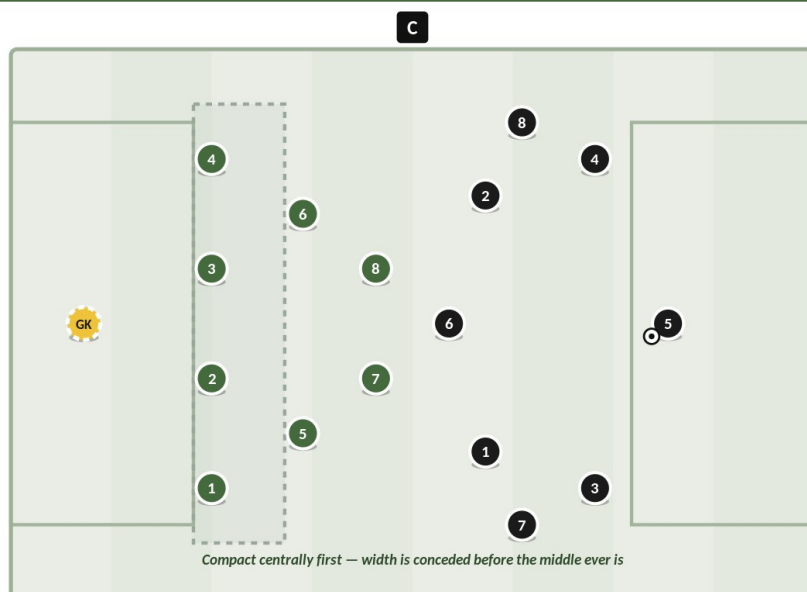
Success indicators:

- The block stays compact and central when the ball is central, shifting sensibly for wide balls without overcommitting.
- Clean clearances and regains increase as the practice progresses.
- The goalkeeper's organisational calls are used and followed.

Coach's eye: watch the block's central gap, not just its width — a low block that concedes the wide areas while keeping the middle tight is doing exactly what this practice teaches; one that closes down everywhere equally is missing the point.

H21.3 HOLD THE BOX — Low-Block Organisation

44 x 30 m • 8v8 + GK • a compact low block protects the centre, then the box, as the picture develops • 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Building team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ■ Low-block line

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 21 • 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 44x30 metre area with penalty box markings at one end, a goalkeeper in yellow inside the box, and a dashed low-block reference line in front of the box. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 organised in a compact low-block shape, and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch, testing the block. White football near a black player. Title: 'HOLD THE BOX — Low-Block Organisation'. Subtitle: '44 x 30 m • 8v8 + GK • a compact low block protects the centre, then the box, as the picture develops • 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 compact green-bibbed defensive block organised near their own penalty area, the goalkeeper visible organising the line, black-bibbed players probing both centrally and wide, 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 near a penalty area. A compact group of players in dark green bibs organised in a low defensive block, with the goalkeeper visible organising the line from behind. Players in black bibs probing the block both centrally and out wide. 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 — BACKS TO THE WALL (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards clean regains and clearances won while defending a compact low block, 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 clean regain or clearance won inside a marked low-block area near either goal 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 jockeying and low-block 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 jockeying, delaying, and clearing technique under game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly protecting the centre first inside the marked low-block area.
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 disciplined low-block defending.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best low-block regain or clearance work?
2. What's one thing from this week — pressing high, holding a mid-block, or defending a low block — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does defending well in a low block matter just as much as pressing well higher up the pitch?

Progressions:

1. Increase the bonus value for a regain won specifically through a correctly executed show-wide jockey.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase pressure inside the low-block area.

Regressions:

- 1. Allow any regain or clearance 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
Players dive in for tackles inside the low-block area, chasing the bonus	The condition is chased rather than defended within the correct discipline	Tackles are attempted early and often missed, rather than delayed and covered	Stop	Short group intervention: "the bonus rewards good defending, not diving in"	Resume
The team avoids engaging at all inside the low-block area, defeating the purpose of the condition	Caution or lack of confidence after an earlier correction	No defensive actions attempted even when the picture clearly calls for one	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was there a chance to defend that well 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.

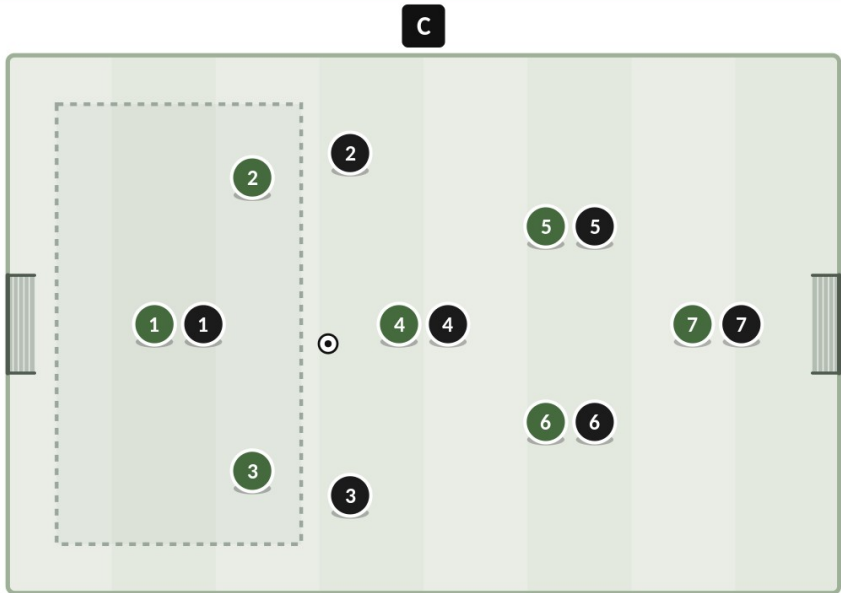
Success indicators:

- Regains and clearances following genuine low-block discipline increase across the practice.
- Players jockey and delay rather than diving in in the marked low-block area.
- 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.

H21.4 BACKS TO THE WALL — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • bonus for a clean regain or clearance won defending a compact low block • 17 minutes



Team A

Team B

Ball

Low-block area

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 and a dashed low-block area marked near one 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 inside the marked low-block area. Title: 'BACKS TO THE WALL — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 7v7 · bonus for a clean regain or clearance won defending a compact low block · 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 defender clearing the ball cleanly under pressure near their own goal, team-mates well organised around them, 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 clearing the ball cleanly under pressure near their own goal, with team-mates well organised around them. 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: "If we're defending deep on Saturday, what do we protect first — and what are we happy to give up?"

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Choose the correct block height — high press or mid-block — based on the scoreline and game situation, and organise the low block correctly when forced deeper.
2. Execute the correct trigger for whichever block is chosen, collectively and without hesitation.
3. Protect the centre first in any deeper block, conceding width before the middle or the box.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Front players:** recognise and act on the called or read scenario, setting the press trigger for the team behind them.
2. **Midfield unit:** hold the correct distance between lines for whichever block is in use.
3. **Back line and goalkeeper:** organise the low block's compactness and call adjustments as the ball moves.

Individual role reminders:

- Know the trigger for whichever block the team is currently using — don't press on your own instinct alone.
- If you're jockeying an attacker, show them wide and delay — protect the centre first.
- Commit clearly to the chosen block rather than drifting indecisively between two.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Whether the block height chosen matched the game scenario.
- Number of clean regains or clearances won, by block used.
- Number of central entries into the box conceded while defending a low block.
- Number of turnovers or breakdowns caused by an unclear or mismatched block choice.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

High press, mid-block, and low block

STRUCTURE	HOW THE HIGH PRESS IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	HOW THE LOW BLOCK IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	KEY RISK
4-3-3	The front three engage the opposition's back line directly, with full-backs stepping to support wide	The back four holds a narrow, compact line in front of the box, with the front three dropping to screen central passing lanes	The recognition-and-choice principle, and the centre-first protection order	Full-backs pressing too high in a mid-block, leaving space in behind for a switch of play
3-4-3	The front three and wing-backs step together, compressing the pitch vertically	The back three relies on its own compactness centrally, with wing-backs tucking in to add width protection when needed	The recognition-and-choice principle, and the centre-first protection order	The back three being outnumbered centrally if a wing-back is drawn too far wide too early

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.