



Week 22 — Tactical Adaptability

Tags: `possession` `progression` `switching-play` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	22 of 36
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Core principle	Progression: through, around or over
Secondary principle	Switching the point of attack
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Weeks 20–21 taught the team how to organise its own attacking and defensive shapes. Week 22 turns the picture around: the team now practises playing <i>against</i> the two extremes of opposition organisation — a high press (Tuesday) and a packed low block (Thursday) — and learns that each demands a different in-possession solution: beating a high press rewards speed and directness (through, around, or over, before the press resets), while unlocking a low block rewards patience and manipulation (quick combinations in tight areas, and switching the ball to drag the block across before attacking the space it leaves behind).
Formation-neutral explanation	"Playing against a high press" and "playing against a low block" describe the opponent's organisation, not the team's own formation — any team, in any structure, will face both pictures across a season, and the correct response depends on reading the opponent's shape rather than applying a single fixed method regardless of what's in front of the team.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 team facing a high press looks to combine quickly through the double pivot or switch early to an isolated winger before the press can reset; facing a low block, the same team can overload one side with a full-back and winger combination, then switch to the far side once the block has shifted across. A 3-4-3 team facing a high press can use its wing-backs as out balls to play around the press directly; facing a low block, the same team's back three can patiently circulate possession, using the extra body to draw the block out before switching. Both structures use this week's same through/around/over and switching principles — only the specific players carrying them out change.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, check whether the correct in-possession solution (directness against a press, patience against a block) was genuinely read and applied, or whether the team simply played its usual way regardless of what the opponent presented — a good result doesn't confirm the read was correct. Name it if worth naming.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team struggled specifically against a high press or a low block, 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 pictures scale to reduced numbers — the underlying reading-and-responding skill matters more than rehearsing every picture at full numbers every week.

Tuesday — Session 43

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	43 of 72
Week	22
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Playing against a high press
Short summary	Compares beating a high press by combining through it (a quick third-man combination before the press can reset) against beating it around the outside (an early switch of play into the space the press has vacated), then applies both solutions inside a full conditioned match against a genuine, live press.
Tags	`possession` `progression` `beating-the-press`
Primary learning objective	The team recognises whether the picture in front of it calls for a direct combination through the press or a switch of play around it.
Secondary learning objective	Whichever solution is chosen is executed quickly, before the press has time to reset or recover.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: two distinct in-possession solutions on show.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer turnovers under a high press, and more clean breaks past it, whichever solution is used.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high — sharp, high-tempo combination and switching actions.
Recommended intensity	7-8 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 22 flat markers · 14 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10-22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; in Practice 4 the goalkeeper is a genuine option for both the through-combination and the switch.
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>Beat the</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
		<i>First Wave</i>	
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Break the Press</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Escape and Switch</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Press Breakers</i>	Black
0:59–1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — BEAT THE FIRST WAVE (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of reacting quickly to an arriving press, before any tactical structure is added.

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

Walkthrough: Rondo-style possession in which one presser is introduced, and the group must complete a quick combination or a switch pass to the far side before the presser closes the gap — the two solutions this week teaches, rehearsed at speed.

Rules: The ball must reach the far side or complete the combination within three passes of the presser arriving.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* quick, accurate passing under time pressure.
- *Psychological:* recognising the press early enough to choose the right solution.

PRACTICE 2 — BREAK THE PRESS (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces both solutions to a high press side by side, so players can feel directly the technical demands of a quick combination through the press against an early switch of play around it.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 46 x 26 m, split into two comparison zones
- **Players:** 4 attackers vs 3 pressers in each zone (8 attackers, 6 pressers total)
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, one per zone, as the starting point of each solution
- **Team sizes:** 4 v 3 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 solutions) at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** toward a target end in each zone

Practice walkthrough: One zone rehearses playing through the press: a quick third-man combination that finds a central passing lane before the press can close it down. The other zone rehearses playing around the press: an early, accurate switch of play that finds the space the press has vacated on the far side. Both groups face an identical three-presser picture, so the only variable is the solution chosen.

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

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the third-man runner's timing in the through-zone is entirely different from the switching player's technique in the around-zone.
- *Unit:* the whole group's spacing and passing lanes change with the solution being used.
- *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: *Time, Turn, Switch, Travel.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean, quick combination technique in the through-zone; accurate, well-weighted switching technique in the around-zone.
Tactical	Understanding which passing lane each solution exploits.
Physical	Sharp, sudden acceleration for the third-man run; a longer, controlled striking action for the switch.

CORNER	POINT
Psychological	Comfort operating with both solutions, not just the more familiar one.
Communication & leadership	Players confirming which solution the group is currently using.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made the third-man combination succeed or fail against the press?
2. What made the switch of play succeed or fail at finding the space behind the press?
3. Which solution did your group find more comfortable, and why might that not always be the right choice?
4. How does this connect to Week 6's progression-around-pressure work — is the switch of play the same idea applied at a wider scale?

Progressions:

1. Add a fourth presser to each zone, testing whether the solution still holds.
2. Reduce the time allowed to execute the solution once the press arrives.
3. Add a condition requiring the solution to end in a shot or a clean break past the pressers.

Regressions:

1. Walk each solution through with no opposition before adding any.
2. Widen each zone for more time and space.
3. Reduce to two pressers per zone.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The third-man run arrives too early or too late, missing the combination window	Poor timing relative to the second pass	The runner is either offside, in the wrong space, or has to check back for the ball	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify the timing cue for the run	Resume
The switch pass is too slow or poorly weighted, allowing the press to recover before it arrives	Technical execution under pressure, or hesitation before playing the switch	The receiving player is closed down before or immediately after the ball arrives	Stop	Short group intervention: clarify the weight and timing the switch needs	Resume

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

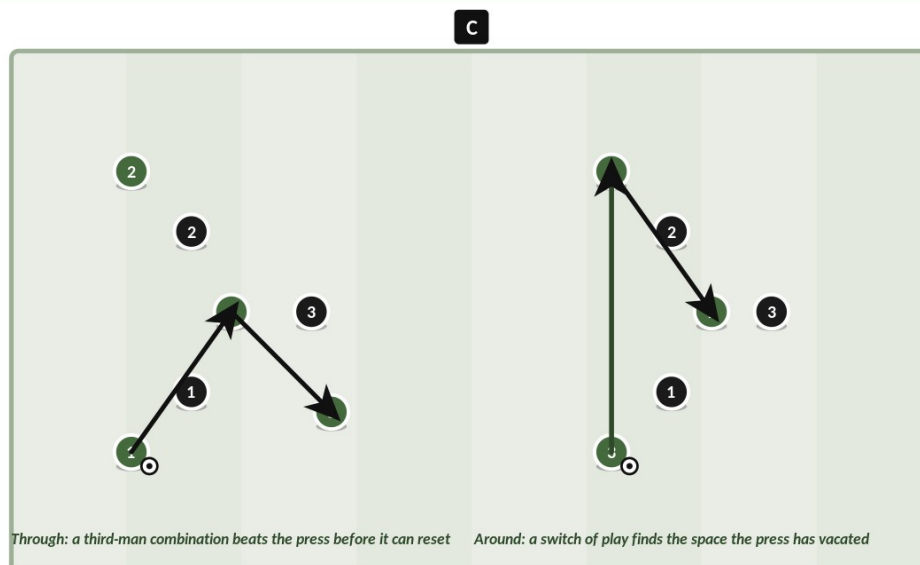
Success indicators:

- Both groups can execute their solution cleanly by the end of the practice.
- Players can articulate the technical demand of each solution.
- The press is beaten more often as the practice progresses.

Coach's eye: watch the moment just before the ball is played — a player who has already decided which solution to use, and is shaping their body accordingly, has understood the picture; a player who decides only after receiving the ball is a beat too slow.

T22.2 BREAK THE PRESS — Through vs Around, Compared

46 x 26 m • two groups rehearse combining through a high press and switching around it • 15 minutes



● Attacking team ● Pressing team ○ Ball ➔ Combination / progression pass
➔ Switch of play

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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. Left zone: four players in dark green bibs numbered 1, 2, 6, 8 combining through three players in black bibs numbered 1–3 pressing. Right zone: four players in dark green bibs numbered 3, 4, 7 with a long diagonal switch pass between two of them, three players in black bibs numbered 1–3 pressing. White footballs near a green player in each zone. Black solid arrows showing combination passes on the left, a bold diagonal arrow showing the switch of play on the right. Title: 'BREAK THE PRESS — Through vs Around, Compared'. Subtitle: '46 x 26 m • two groups rehearse combining through a high press and switching around it • 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 combining quickly through tight pressure on the left, a second group of green-bibbed players executing a long, accurate switch pass on the right, black-bibbed pressers in each zone, coach moving between the two zones observing both solutions.

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 combining quickly through tight pressure from players in black bibs. On the right, a player in a dark green bib striking a long, accurate diagonal pass across the pitch to a team-mate. A coach moving between the two zones, observing both solutions. 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 — ESCAPE AND SWITCH (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves both solutions into a genuine possession game against a real, live press, requiring the team to choose live between combining through the press and switching around it, based on the picture in front of them.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 26 m
- **Players:** 7 possession players vs 5 pressers
- **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 pressers, and must choose live whether to combine through the press or switch around it, based on which side the press has committed to. A clean progression reaching the target end scores a point, regardless of which solution produced it.

Rules: Standard possession-progression rules; the coach notes, without necessarily announcing, which solution the team used and whether it was the better choice.

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:

- The press commits centrally, leaving the far side open → switch the point of attack.
- The press is spread but a central lane briefly opens → combine through it quickly.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean execution of whichever solution the moment calls for.
Tactical	Genuine, live recognition of which solution the press's shape allows.
Physical	Repeated sharp combination and switching actions at match-realistic intensity.
Psychological	Confidence to commit to a solution rather than hesitating.
Communication & leadership	Players calling for the switch or the combination clearly and early.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the team whether to combine through the press or switch around it?
2. What happened when the wrong solution was chosen for the picture?
3. How quickly did the team execute once the decision was made?

- How does this connect to Week 14's progression-choice work — is choosing between combining and switching a similar kind of judgement?

Progressions:

- Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the decision.
- Add a condition that a point only counts if the solution is executed within three touches of the decision being made.
- 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 solution while the decision-making skill is being built.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team always tries to combine through, even when the press has clearly committed to one side	Comfort with the more familiar solution overrides the genuine decision	The switch is available but not used	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was there a switch on there?"	Resume
The switch is played too slowly, allowing the press to recover before it's useful	Hesitation before committing to the switch	The receiving player is closed down soon after the switch arrives	Stop	Short group intervention: "the switch has to be played the moment we see it, not after"	Resume

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

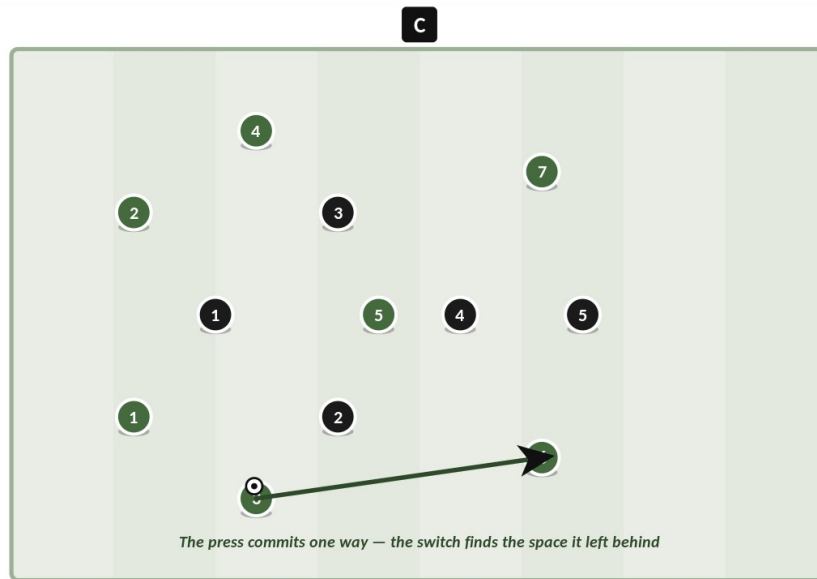
Success indicators:

- The team varies its solution based on the genuine picture, not habit.
- Progression past the press increases across the practice.
- The team commits clearly and quickly to whichever solution it chooses.

Coach's eye: watch for the moment of commitment — a team that decides and executes quickly is showing more understanding than one that hesitates between the two solutions until the opportunity has passed.

T22.3 ESCAPE AND SWITCH — Small-Sided Game

40 x 26 m • 7v5 • progress through the press or switch around it — either counts, if it's clean • 15 minutes



● Possession team ● Pressing team ● Ball ➔ Switch of play

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 40x26 metre area with dimension labels. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and five players in black bibs numbered 1–5 spread across the area, the black players compressed toward one side. White football near a green player. A bold diagonal black arrow showing a switch of play toward the open side. Title: 'ESCAPE AND SWITCH — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '40 x 26 m • 7v5 • progress through the press or switch around it — either counts, if it's clean • 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 pressers compressed toward one side, a green-bibbed player striking a long switch pass toward the open far side, coach on the touchline tracking the decision 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 compressed toward one side of the pitch. A player in a dark green bib striking a long diagonal pass toward the open far side. A coach on the touchline, closely tracking the decision. 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 — PRESS BREAKERS (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, requiring the attacking team to beat a genuine, live high press through, around, or over, choosing the correct solution based on the picture the press presents.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the attacking team's goalkeeper is a genuine option for both the through-combination and the switch

- **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 one team presses high throughout, and the attacking team must read and beat the press using whichever solution — through, around, or over — the picture calls for, 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 solution is chosen.
Tactical	Genuine, live recognition of which solution the press's shape allows.
Physical	The week's peak physical demand — repeated sharp combination and switching actions combined with match intensity.
Psychological	Composure to commit to a solution rather than hesitating.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and calling for the chosen solution out loud.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team correctly beating the press tonight?
2. Which solution — through, around, or over — was used most often, and did that match what the press was actually presenting?
3. How does this connect to Week 19's build-up shape work — did the shape the team built in affect which solution was available?

4. What did the pressing team have to solve once your team beat the press successfully?

Progressions:

1. Instruct the pressing team to vary its press intensity and shape, testing whether the attacking team adapts its solution.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

1. Instruct the pressing team to press less intensely 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 solution 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 recognise which side the press has committed to	Genuine cognitive demand of a live, moving picture	The wrong solution persists for several phases before adjusting	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The switch of play is attempted but consistently under-hit or over-hit	Technical breakdown under full match fatigue	The switch is intercepted or runs out of play	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what did that switch need — more or less?"	Resume

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

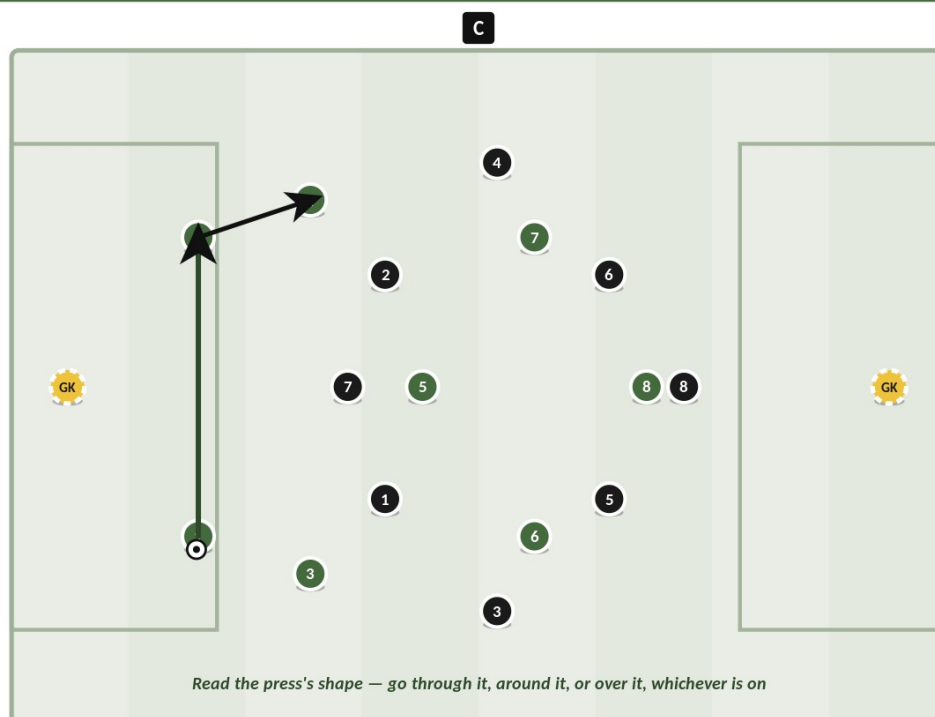
Success indicators:

- The team recognises and executes the correct solution for the press's shape.
- Clean progressions past the press increase across the practice.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, which solution 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 solutions, not just whether either solution works in isolation.

T22.4 PRESS BREAKERS — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • beat a genuine high press through, around, or over • 15 minutes



● Attacking team ● Pressing team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ➔ Progression pass
➔ Switch of play

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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. A bold diagonal black arrow showing a switch of play, and a shorter solid black arrow showing a combination pass. White football near a green player. Title: 'PRESS BREAKERS — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • beat a genuine high press through, around, or over • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Wide elevated view of a full-scale 8v8 conditioned match, a green-bibbed player striking a long switch pass across the pitch under pressure from black-bibbed opponents, team-mates already moving to support the new side, coach on the touchline near halfway tracking the whole picture.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Wide elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 8v8 conditioned football match on a half-size grass pitch with full-size goals and goalkeepers in yellow at each end. A player in a dark green bib striking a long diagonal switch pass across the pitch under pressure from a player in a black bib. Team-mates in dark green bibs already moving to support the new side. 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: "If we're pressed high on Saturday, what tells us to go through it, and what tells us to switch around it?"

Thursday — Session 44

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	44 of 72
Week	22
Season phase	4 — Tactical Adaptability
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Playing against a low block
Short summary	Teaches the specific patience and manipulation a packed low block demands — quick, one-touch combinations to unlock tight central areas, and switching the point of attack to drag the block across before attacking the space it leaves behind — then applies both inside a full team practice against a genuine, organised low block.
Tags	`possession` `switching-play` `breaking-down-a-block`
Primary learning objective	The team manipulates a compact low block using combination play in tight areas and switches of play, rather than forcing low-percentage central passes.
Secondary learning objective	Overloading one side of the pitch is used deliberately to drag the block across before switching to exploit the space it leaves behind.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: two distinct in-possession solutions on show.
Expected tactical outcome	More clean entries into the box against a packed defence, and fewer forced, low-percentage central passes.
Expected physical load	Moderate — this session rewards patience and technical precision over sheer intensity.
Recommended intensity	6.5–7.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout, providing a genuine recycling option to help manipulate the block.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 34 m (Practice 3).
Area layout	A tight technical zone for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 3 reduces to a 6-player attacking group vs 6 low-block defenders.
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 packed 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>Patient Hands</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Unlock the Door</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Break the Low Block</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Find the Gap</i>	Black
0:59–1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — PATIENT HANDS (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of patient circulation before committing to a forward pass, rehearsing the discipline a low block demands before any tactical shape is added.

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

Walkthrough: Rondo-style possession with no pressure, in which the group must complete a minimum number of passes before playing forward, rehearsing the patience this week's teaching depends on.

Rules: No forward pass may be played until at least six passes have been completed.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean, unhurried passing technique.
- *Psychological:* patience — resisting the urge to force an early forward pass.

PRACTICE 2 — UNLOCK THE DOOR (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific combination technique — quick, one-touch third-man play in a tight, packed zone — that unlocks a low block with no space to give.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 5 attackers vs 4 low-block defenders in a packed central zone
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, providing a recycling option from outside the packed zone

- **Team sizes:** 5 v 4
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the packed central 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:** groups swap every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention and progression through the zone

Practice walkthrough: Five attackers work inside a deliberately tight, packed central zone against four low-block defenders, rehearsing quick, one-touch combinations and third-man runs to find the small gaps a compact defence still leaves, even when it appears to have no space to give.

Rules: Standard possession-progression rules within the zone; a clean pass that breaks the defensive line scores a point.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* precise, quick decision-making and one-touch technique in a packed space.
- *Unit:* the whole group's spacing and timing must be sharper than in a more open practice.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- A third-man run is available → play the first pass and release the run immediately.
- No clean combination is available → recycle patiently rather than forcing a low-percentage pass.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Quick, accurate one-touch or two-touch passing in tight space.
Tactical	Recognising and timing third-man combinations in a packed zone.
Physical	Sharp, sudden movements over very short distances.
Psychological	Patience combined with precise timing — not rushing, but not hesitating either.
Communication & leadership	Clear, quick calls to organise the combination in a crowded space.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made the third-man combination succeed or fail in such a tight space?

2. What happened when the team tried to force a pass rather than recycling patiently?
3. How does a packed low block change the timing of a combination compared to more open play?
4. How does this connect to Week 12's player-between-the-lines work — is finding a gap in a low block a similar kind of recognition?

Progressions:

1. Add a fifth low-block defender, testing whether the combination still holds.
2. Reduce the size of the packed zone, sharpening the precision required.
3. Add a condition limiting the attacking team to two touches per player.

Regressions:

1. Widen the packed zone for more space and time.
2. Reduce the low-block defenders to three.
3. Allow the attacking team unlimited touches while the timing skill is being built.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team forces a central pass into a covered lane rather than recycling	Impatience, or a habit formed from open-play practices where more space is available	The ball is lost attempting a low-percentage central pass	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and demonstrate the patient recycling option	Resume
The third-man run is telegraphed too early, allowing the low block to adjust	Poor timing or an overly obvious visual cue before the run begins	The low block shifts to cover the run before the pass is played	Stop	Short group intervention: clarify the timing and disguise needed for the run	Resume

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

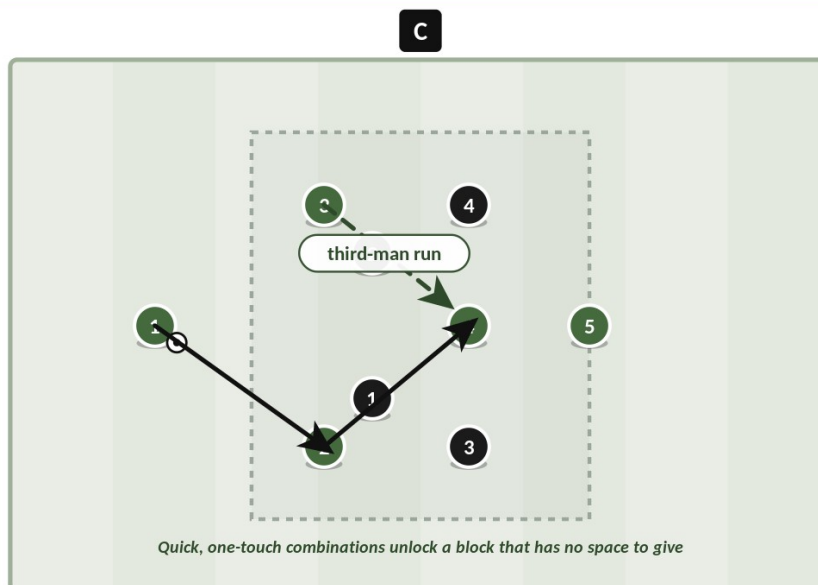
Success indicators:

- The team completes clean combinations that break the defensive line with increasing frequency.
- Patient recycling is used sensibly when no combination is available.
- The low-block defenders find the packed zone genuinely difficult to defend by the end of the practice.

Coach's eye: watch the moment just before the third-man run begins — a run that starts only after the first pass has committed the defence is far harder to defend than one that starts too early.

H22.2 UNLOCK THE DOOR — Combination in Tight Spaces

34 x 22 m • 5v4 in a packed zone • third-man combinations to unlock a crowded low block • 15 minutes



● Attacking team ● Low-block defenders ● Ball ➔ Third-man combination - - ➔ Third-man run

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 22 • 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 34x22 metre area with dimension labels and a dashed packed central zone. Five players in dark green bibs numbered 1–5 combining against four players in black bibs numbered 1–4 defending compactly. White football near a green player. Black solid arrows showing a two-pass combination, with a curved dashed line showing a third-man run. Title: 'UNLOCK THE DOOR — Combination in Tight Spaces'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 5v4 in a packed zone • third-man combinations to unlock a crowded low 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 tight training zone, five green-bibbed attackers combining in a small, congested space against four compact black-bibbed defenders, one green player making a sharp third-man run into a gap, coach centrally positioned observing the timing closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training in a tight, congested area. Five players in dark green bibs combining with quick, close passes against four compact players in black bibs. One green-bibbed player making a sharp run into a small gap between defenders. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the timing of 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 3 — BREAK THE LOW BLOCK (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the tight-space combination work into a full team practice, teaching the whole team to deliberately overload one side of the pitch to drag a compact low block across, then switch the point of attack to exploit the space it leaves behind on the far side.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 attacking outfield + goalkeeper vs 8 low-block defenders
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the attacking team's goalkeeper is a genuine recycling option, helping to draw the block before the switch is played

- **Team sizes:** 8 + GK v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions and a marked low-block reference line

- **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 attacking team works to break the block down; the

defending team holds a compact, organised low block

Practice walkthrough: The attacking team deliberately overloads one side of the pitch with extra players and combinations, drawing the low block's compact shape across to defend it. Once the block has genuinely shifted, the attacking team switches the point of attack quickly to the far side, where the earlier overload has left space for a clean entry into the box.

Rules: Standard positional practice rules; a clean entry into the box following a switch of play scores a bonus point for the attacking team, a regain or clearance scores a point for the defending team.

Tactical roles: the full tight-space combination skill set from Practice 2, combined with a team-wide overload-and-switch structure.

Decision-making triggers:

- The block has genuinely shifted across to defend the overload → switch the point of attack immediately.
- The block has not yet committed → continue patient circulation and combination on the overloaded side.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean combination technique on the overloaded side, and accurate switching technique to the far side.
Tactical	Reading whether the block has genuinely shifted before committing to the switch.
Physical	Sustained patient possession combined with sudden, sharp switching actions.
Psychological	Patience to build the overload properly before switching too early.
Communication & leadership	The team organising the overload and calling for the switch at the correct moment.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the team the block had genuinely shifted and the switch was on?
2. What happened when the switch was played too early, before the block had committed?
3. How does this connect to Week 13's overloads-and-rest-defence work — is this the same overload principle applied specifically against a packed defence?
4. What space did the low block leave once it had shifted to defend the overloaded side?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine attacking direction and require the switch to result in a shot or a clean box entry.
2. Reduce the time allowed to build the overload before switching, sharpening the decision.
3. Instruct the low block to shift more slowly, testing the team's patience.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the low block's numbers temporarily, simplifying the picture.
2. Widen the practice area for more time.
3. Allow the coach to call "switch now" while the timing skill is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The switch is played before the block has genuinely shifted	Impatience, or a habit of switching on a fixed rhythm rather than reading the picture	The far side is still well defended when the switch arrives	Stop	Short group intervention: "had the block actually moved there?"	Resume
The team never switches, over-committing to the overloaded side indefinitely	Comfort with sustained possession overrides the willingness to change the point of attack	The ball never leaves the overloaded side despite the block being fully shifted	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was there a switch on there, and did we take it?"	Resume

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

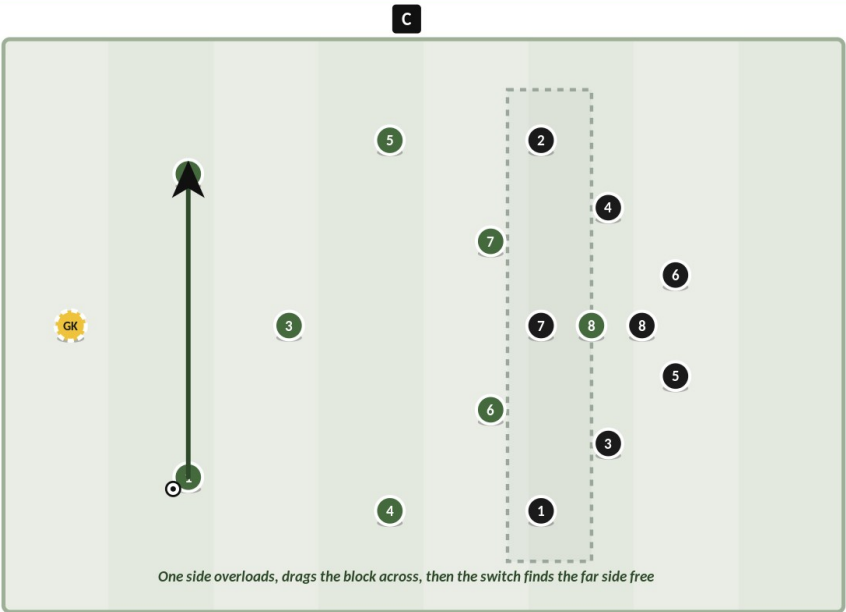
Success indicators:

- The team builds a genuine overload before switching, rather than switching prematurely.
- Clean box entries following a switch increase across the practice.
- The team reads the block's shift accurately before committing to the switch.

Coach's eye: watch the low block's shape, not just the ball — the moment the block has genuinely compressed toward the overloaded side is the moment the switch becomes the right decision, and that moment is visible before the pass is even played.

H22.3 BREAK THE LOW BLOCK — Overloads and Switches

50 x 34 m · 8v8 + GK · switch the point of attack and overload one side to unlock a compact low block · 15 minutes



● Attacking team ● Low-block defenders ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ➔ Switch of play ■ Low-block line

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · Week 22 · Diagrams not to scale

AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 50x34 metre area with dimension labels. A goalkeeper in yellow on the left. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1-8 overloading the left side of the pitch, eight players in black bibs numbered 1-8 organised in a compact low-block shape shifted toward the same side, with a dashed reference line marking the block's position. White football near a green player on the left. A bold diagonal black arrow showing a switch of play toward the open right side. Title: 'BREAK THE LOW BLOCK — Overloads and Switches'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m · 8v8 + GK · switch the point of attack and overload one side to unlock a compact low 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 wide view of a positional practice, a group of green-bibbed attackers combining on one side of the pitch, a compact black-bibbed low block shifted across to defend it, a green-bibbed player striking a long switch pass toward the open far side, 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 combining and overloading one side of the pitch. A compact group of players in black bibs organised in a low defensive block, shifted across to defend the overloaded side. A player in a dark green bib striking a long diagonal switch pass toward the open far side. 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 — FIND THE GAP (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards a goal following a genuine switch of play against a packed defence, 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:** 13 outfield, rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 6 (defending team plays with a compact block bias)
- **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 7v6 game in which the defending team is coached to hold a compact, packed low block, and a goal that follows a switch of play is worth double, directly rewarding this week's central skill.

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

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

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

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean combination and switching technique under game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly identifying when the block has shifted enough to justify a switch.
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 a well-timed switch of play.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best switch-of-play goal work?
2. What's one thing from this week — beating a high press or unlocking a low block — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does patience matter as much as directness when the picture calls for it?

Progressions:

1. Increase the bonus value for a goal following a switch that comes from a genuine, deliberate overload.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase the central congestion the low block creates.

Regressions:

- 1. Allow any goal 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
The team forces switches without first building a genuine overload	The condition is chased rather than played naturally	Switches are attempted into a side that hasn't been drawn out of position	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was the block actually stretched there?"	Resume
The team avoids switching altogether, defeating the purpose of the condition	Caution or lack of confidence after an earlier correction	No attempts to switch even when the block is clearly stretched	Stop	Short group intervention: "we need to trust the switch again — that's what tonight is for"	Resume

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

Success indicators:

- Goals following a genuine, well-timed switch of play increase across the practice.
- The team builds overloads deliberately before switching, rather than switching randomly.
- 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.

H22.4 FIND THE GAP — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • a goal following a switch of play against a packed defence is worth double • 17 minutes

C

● Team A

● Team B

⊙ Ball

➔ Switch of play

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 22 • 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 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 compressed toward one side of the pitch. White football near a green player on the compressed side. A bold diagonal black arrow showing a switch of play toward the open far side. Title: 'FIND THE GAP — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 7v7 · a goal following a switch of play against a packed defence is worth double · 17 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated sideline view of a lively small-sided game, a green-bibbed player striking a switch pass across the pitch toward an open teammate, black-bibbed defenders caught compressed on the far side, 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 small-sided football game on a grass pitch with two full-size goals. A player in a dark green bib striking a long diagonal switch pass across the pitch toward an open team-mate. Players in black bibs caught compressed on the far side of the pitch. 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 facing a packed defence on Saturday, what tells us the switch is on — and can we be patient enough to wait for it?"

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Read the opponent's defensive organisation and choose the correct in-possession solution — directness against a high press, patience and switching against a low block.
2. Execute the chosen solution quickly and cleanly, before the opponent can reset or recover.
3. Use deliberate overloads to manipulate a packed low block before switching to exploit the space it leaves behind.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** provide the patient recycling option that helps draw a low block out of position.
2. **Midfield unit:** time third-man combinations and switches of play accurately.
3. **Front players:** recognise when the picture calls for directness against a press, and when it calls for patience against a block.

Individual role reminders:

- Against a high press, decide quickly — through, around, or over — and execute before the press resets.
- Against a low block, be patient; don't force a low-percentage central pass when recycling is the better option.
- Know when your side of the pitch is the overload, and when it's your job to be ready for the switch.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Number of clean progressions past a high press, by solution used.
- Number of clean box entries following a switch of play against a low block.
- Number of turnovers caused by a forced pass into a packed central area.
- Whether the correct in-possession solution matched the opponent's actual defensive organisation.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

Beating a high press and unlocking a low block

STRUCTURE	HOW BEATING A HIGH PRESS IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	HOW UNLOCKING A LOW BLOCK IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	KEY RISK
4-3-3	Quick combination through the double pivot, or an early switch to an isolated winger	A full-back and winger overload on one side, switching to the far winger once the block shifts	The through/around/over and overload-and-switch principles	Committing too many players to the overload, leaving insufficient cover if possession is lost
3-4-3	Wing-backs used as direct out balls to play around the press	The back three patiently circulates possession, using the extra body to draw the block before switching	The through/around/over and overload-and-switch principles	The back three being caught upfield if the switch is misplaced and possession is lost in a advanced position

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.