



Week 24 — Match Management

Tags: `game-management` `game-state` `compactness` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	24 of 36
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Core principle	Recognise the picture before playing
Secondary principle	Compactness
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Phase 4 taught the team to adapt its shape and approach to the picture in front of it. Phase 5 opens by teaching a specific, high-value version of that same skill: reading the scoreline and time remaining as part of the picture, not just the opponent's shape. This week the team learns to protect a lead — reducing unnecessary risk in dangerous areas while still playing football — and to manage the closing stages of a game legally and effectively, controlling tempo and restarts rather than simply hoping the final whistle arrives.
Formation-neutral explanation	"Protecting a lead" and "seeing out the clock" describe a team's relationship to the game state, not a formation or a fixed defensive shape — any team, in any structure, needs to recognise when the picture calls for reduced risk and controlled tempo, and this is a decision-making skill layered on top of whatever shape the team is already playing.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 team protecting a lead might ask its wide forwards to track back further and support a numbers-up defensive picture, without changing its underlying formation. A 3-4-3 team doing the same might ask its wing-backs to sit slightly deeper, prioritising defensive solidity over their usual attacking width. In both cases, the formation stays the same — what changes is the risk tolerance and tempo the team applies within it.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, check specifically whether points have been dropped from winning positions this season — if the underlying performance has been good but leads haven't been protected, this week directly addresses the gap. Name it if worth naming.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team lost control of a game it was winning, or conceded late through careless game management, 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 themes scale to reduced numbers — the underlying recognition-and-composure skill matters more than rehearsing every scenario at full numbers every week.

Tuesday — Session 47

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	47 of 72
Week	24
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Protecting a lead
Short summary	Teaches the team to recognise a leading scoreline as part of the picture, reducing unnecessary risk in dangerous areas through simple, secure retention, then applies the decision inside a full conditioned match scripted around defending a 1-0 lead.
Tags	`game-management` `possession` `decision-making`
Primary learning objective	The team recognises when the scoreline calls for reduced risk, and plays accordingly without losing its underlying identity.
Secondary learning objective	The team stays compact and secure in deep areas rather than inviting unnecessary pressure.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: fewer points dropped from winning positions.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer turnovers in dangerous areas when the team is already leading.
Expected physical load	Moderate, situational — intensity is tied to the scenario rather than sustained high output.
Recommended intensity	6–7 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; in Practice 4 the goalkeeper is a genuine part of the secure retention picture, not just a shot-stopper.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A tight, deep retention zone for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 reduces to 5v2; Practice 3 becomes 6v5; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Practice 2 works in any deep area with cones marking the retention zone; Practice 4 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>Safe or Risky</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Keep It Tight</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Game State</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Hold the Lead</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — SAFE OR RISKY (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of quickly classifying a pass or decision as "safe" or "risky" relative to the pitch area, 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 the coach periodically calls "safe" (the group must play a simple, low-risk pass) or "risky is off" (no forced attempts at a difficult pass), rehearsing the recognition this week's teaching depends on.

Rules: On the "safe" call, the next pass must be a simple, short, low-risk option.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean, unhurried passing technique.
- *Psychological:* recognising and accepting when a safe option is the correct choice, not a lesser one.

PRACTICE 2 — KEEP IT TIGHT (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific technical habit of secure, simple retention in deep areas — the foundation of protecting a lead without needing to change the team's underlying playing identity.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 24 m, with a marked deep retention zone
- **Players:** 5 possession players (including goalkeeper) vs 3 pressers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the goalkeeper plays fully inside the retention group, a genuine passing option throughout

- **Team sizes:** 5 v 3
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the retention 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 rotate every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention within the zone

Practice walkthrough: Five possession players, including the goalkeeper, retain the ball inside a deliberately deep, marked zone against three pressers, using simple, low-risk passing rather than attempting difficult combinations or risky forward passes. The practice deliberately rewards patience and security over ambition.

Rules: A forced or risky pass that leads to a turnover inside the zone counts double against the possession team, sharpening the incentive to play safely.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* each player's job is to offer a simple, available option rather than the most progressive one.
- *Unit:* the whole group's spacing supports secure retention, not forward progress.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- A simple, safe option is available → take it, even if a riskier option also exists.
- No safe option is immediately available → recycle backward or sideways rather than forcing forward.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean, unhurried passing and receiving technique under no unnecessary pressure.
Tactical	Recognising and consistently choosing the safe option over the risky one.
Physical	Controlled, economical movement rather than high-intensity running.
Psychological	Accepting that playing safely is a legitimate, valuable choice, not a failure of ambition.
Communication & leadership	Clear calls confirming the safe option is what's being asked for.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made a pass "safe" versus "risky" in this practice?
2. How did the double-turnover penalty change the way the group played?
3. Why might a team's normal attacking instincts need to be deliberately dialled back in this specific situation?
4. How does this connect to Week 21's low-block work — is protecting a lead partly about applying that same defensive discipline to possession itself?

Progressions:

1. Add a fourth presser, testing whether the group still retains safely under greater pressure.
2. Reduce the retention zone, sharpening the demand for precise, simple technique.
3. Add a genuine scoreline scenario ("1-0 up, five minutes left") as the framing for the practice.

Regressions:

1. Widen the retention zone for more time and space.
2. Reduce to two pressers.
3. Remove the double-turnover penalty while the safe-option habit is being built.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
A player attempts a risky, progressive pass despite a simple option being available	Habitual ambition overrides the situational demand for security	The ball is lost attempting an unnecessary difficult pass	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify the safe option that was missed	Resume
The group becomes so cautious it stops playing entirely, panicking under pressure	Overcorrection — confusing "safe" with "avoid the ball"	Players avoid receiving the ball or rush it away carelessly	Stop	Short group intervention: "safe doesn't mean scared — receive it, then choose simply"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since precise decision-making under a specific constraint is the entire teaching point.

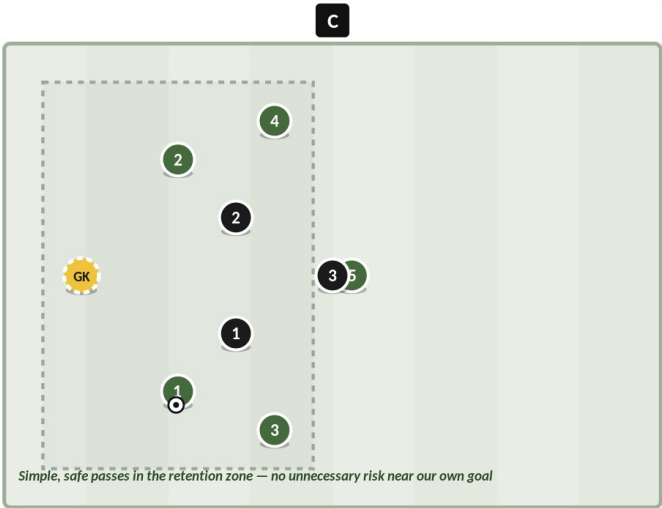
Success indicators:

- The group consistently chooses the safe option when one is available.
- Turnovers inside the zone decrease as the practice progresses.
- Players can articulate why a given pass was the safe choice.

Coach's eye: watch for composure, not just correct choices — a player who receives calmly and then chooses simply is showing more than one who rushes a technically safe pass out of visible anxiety.

T24.2 KEEP IT TIGHT — Secure Retention Under a Lead

34 x 24 m • 5v3 (GK included in the 5) • simple, safe circulation in deep areas when protecting a scoreline • 15 minutes



● Team protecting the lead ● Chasing team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ■ Safe retention zone

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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 34x24 metre area with dimension labels and a dashed deep retention zone. A goalkeeper in yellow inside the zone. Five players in dark green bibs numbered 1–5 and three players in black bibs numbered 1–3 inside the zone. White football near a green player. Title: 'KEEP IT TIGHT — Secure Retention Under a Lead'. Subtitle: '34 x 24 m • 5v3 (GK included in the 5) • simple, safe circulation in deep areas when protecting a scoreline • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training area near a goal, a goalkeeper and green-bibbed defenders circulating the ball calmly and simply under light pressure from black-bibbed pressers, coach centrally positioned observing the decision-making closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training near a goal. A goalkeeper and players in dark green bibs circulating the ball calmly with simple, unhurried passes under light pressure from players in black bibs. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the decision-making. 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 — GAME STATE (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the safe-versus-risky recognition into a genuine possession game against a real opposition group, with the coach calling a scoreline and time-remaining scenario that the team in possession must translate into the correct level of risk.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 7 possession players vs 6 opposition
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 6
- **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, calling scenarios
- **Rotation method:** groups swap every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention and progression

Practice walkthrough: Seven possession players face six opposition players, and the coach periodically calls a scoreline scenario ("1-0 up, ten minutes left" or "0-0, plenty of time") that the possession team must translate into the correct balance of security and ambition, without being told explicitly what to do.

Rules: Standard possession-retention rules; the coach notes, without necessarily announcing, whether the team's approach matched the called scenario.

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

Decision-making triggers:

- The scenario favours protecting a lead → prioritise secure retention over progressive risk.
- The scenario is more open (level scoreline, plenty of time) → play with normal ambition and risk tolerance.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean execution appropriate to whichever level of risk the scenario calls for.
Tactical	Genuine, live translation of a game scenario into the correct approach.
Physical	Controlled intensity that matches the situational demand.
Psychological	Confidence to play safely when it's the correct choice, without feeling it's a lesser contribution.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and confirming its approach based on the called scenario.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What told the team how much risk was appropriate for the called scenario?
2. What happened when the team played too safely, or too riskily, for the scenario?
3. How quickly did the team adjust its approach once a new scenario was called?

- How does this connect to Week 21's scenario-based block-choice work — is this the same recognition skill applied to possession rather than defending?

Progressions:

- Call scenarios more frequently, testing how quickly the team adjusts.
- Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the decision.
- Add a genuine scoring mechanism so the practical stakes of the scenario are felt.

Regressions:

- Allow the coach to state the recommended approach 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 plays the same way regardless of the scenario called	Habit overrides the genuine situational decision	No visible change in approach after a new scenario is called	Stop	Short group intervention: "what did that scenario actually call for?"	Resume
The team becomes overly cautious even in scenarios that don't call for it	Overcorrection after learning the "protect the lead" habit	The team stops playing progressively even when the scenario is level or favourable	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did that scenario actually call for caution?"	Resume

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

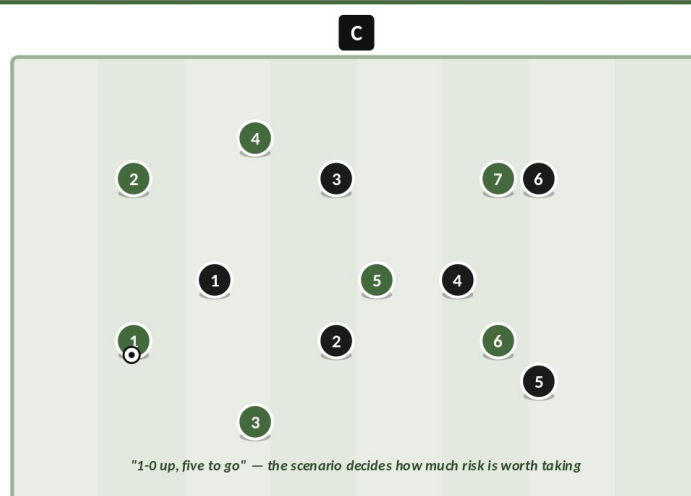
Success indicators:

- The team's approach visibly changes to match the called scenario.
- Reorganisation between approaches happens more quickly across the practice.
- The team retains its underlying identity even when playing more cautiously.

Coach's eye: watch for genuine adaptation, not blanket caution — a team that can still play well while also playing safely, when the scenario calls for it, has understood the lesson; a team that becomes timid in every scenario has not.

T24.3 GAME STATE — Small-Sided Scenario Game

34 x 22 m • 7v6 • the coach calls the scoreline and time remaining, the team in possession plays accordingly • 15 minutes



● Team defending a lead ● Chasing team ○ Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x22 metre area with dimension labels. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread across the area. White football near a green player. Title: 'GAME STATE — Small-Sided Scenario Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 7v6 · the coach calls the scoreline and time remaining, the team in possession plays accordingly · 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 six black-bibbed opponents, coach on the touchline mid-call with an animated, communicating posture, players adjusting their shape and passing tempo in response.

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 six players in black bibs. A coach on the touchline, animated, mid-call, clearly communicating a scenario to the team. Players visibly adjusting their tempo and shape in response. 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 — HOLD THE LEAD (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, scripting one team into a notional 1-0 lead that it must defend for the remainder of the practice, applying the full week's teaching under realistic, sustained match pressure.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the leading team's goalkeeper is a genuine part of the secure retention picture

- **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:** teams swap the leading role at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** standard, both teams attack opposite goals

Practice walkthrough: One team is scripted as leading 1-0 from the start and must defend that notional lead for the full 15 minutes, applying the week's secure retention and compactness principles under genuine, sustained match pressure from the chasing team.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules; the leading team's actual goal difference is tracked separately from the notional 1-0 head start, so the practice reflects realistic pressure to protect an existing advantage.

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 and a genuine scripted scoreline.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution under full match pressure and fatigue, prioritising security appropriately.
Tactical	Genuine, sustained application of reduced-risk decision-making across a full period of play.
Physical	Situational intensity — controlled where possible, high where genuinely demanded.
Psychological	Composure under sustained pressure to protect an advantage.
Communication & leadership	The leading team organising and confirming its game-management approach out loud.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team correctly protecting the lead tonight?
2. Where did the leading team come closest to losing control of the scoreline, and why?
3. How does this connect to Week 15's compactness work — is defending a lead partly about applying that same defensive discipline throughout the whole team?

4. What did the chasing team have to do differently to break down a team playing to protect its lead?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the time remaining announced to the team, increasing the pressure of the closing stages.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the chasing team's intensity while the recognition skill is being consolidated.
2. Reduce to 6v6 on a smaller area.
3. Reintroduce Practice 2's secure-retention zone briefly if the leading team's composure has broken down.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The leading team abandons its normal playing identity entirely, retreating too deep too early	Overcorrection — confusing "protect the lead" with "concede all territory"	The team drops unnecessarily deep despite having no genuine pressure to do so	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The leading team takes an unnecessary risk in a dangerous area under sustained pressure	Habitual ambition overrides the situational demand, especially under fatigue	A risky pass or decision is attempted in the team's own defensive third	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that the moment for that decision?"	Resume

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

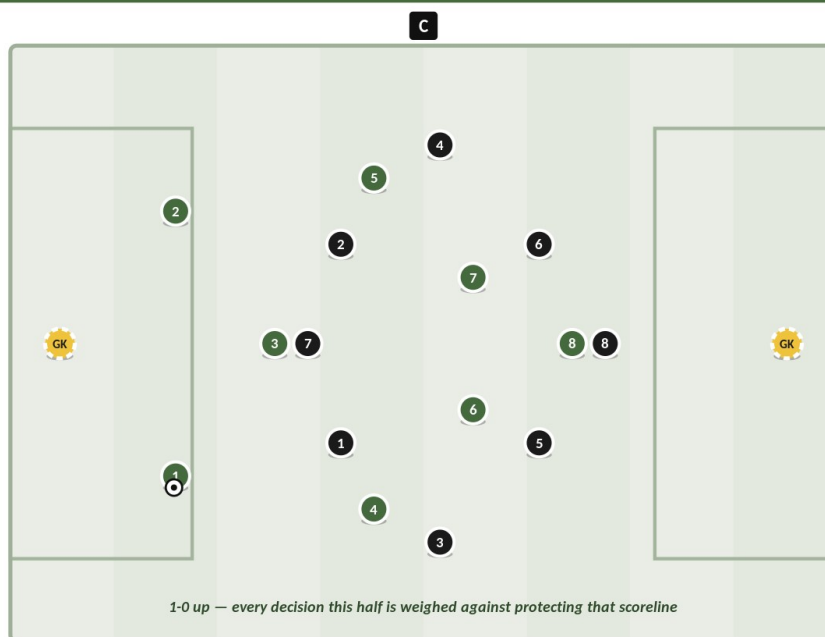
Success indicators:

- The leading team maintains its underlying identity while reducing risk appropriately.
- Turnovers in dangerous areas decrease as the practice progresses.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, specific moments where the lead was protected well.

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 risk-management decisions under sustained pressure, not just the final result.

T24.4 HOLD THE LEAD — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • one team starts 1-0 up and must defend it for the remaining time • 15 minutes



● Team leading 1-0 ● Chasing team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing 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. White football near a green player. Title: 'HOLD THE LEAD — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • one team starts 1-0 up and must defend it for the remaining time • 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 compactly and playing with visible composure, black-bibbed opponents pressing to find an equaliser, coach on the touchline near halfway tracking the whole picture.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Wide elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 8v8 conditioned football match on a half-size grass pitch with full-size goals and goalkeepers in yellow at each end. Players in dark green bibs organised compactly, playing with visible composure and control. Players in black bibs pressing to find an equaliser. 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 1-0 up with ten minutes left on Saturday, what does 'playing smart' actually look like?"

Thursday — Session 48

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	48 of 72
Week	24
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Game management: seeing out the clock
Short summary	Teaches the specific, legal techniques a team needs to control tempo and manage the closing stages of a match — shielding and controlled retention near the touchline, and deliberate management of restarts — then applies the full skill set inside a scripted, timed practice defending a lead to the final whistle.
Tags	`game-management` `tempo-control` `restarts`
Primary learning objective	The team controls the tempo of the game legally and effectively in the closing stages, without resorting to time-wasting that risks cards or unfair play.
Secondary learning objective	The team stays compact throughout a scripted closing period, not just during isolated defensive moments.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: fewer points dropped from winning positions.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer clean opportunities conceded in the closing minutes of matches the team is winning.
Expected physical load	Moderate, situational — controlled tempo work rather than sustained high intensity.
Recommended intensity	6–7 / 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 goalkeeper's own tempo-control technique (controlled distribution, legal use of time on goal kicks and free kicks) is coached directly this week.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 34 m (Practice 3).
Area layout	A tight corner-area 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 chasing.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 3 can extend to a fuller 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Practice 2 works in any corner-shaped area; 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>Controlled Tempo</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Take Your Time</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Manage the Clock</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>See It Out</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — CONTROLLED TEMPO (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of consciously varying the tempo of play on a call, 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 the coach calls "quick" (fast, sharp passing) or "slow" (deliberate, controlled circulation), rehearsing the tempo-control skill this week's teaching depends on.

Rules: The group must visibly change its passing speed within two touches of the call.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean technique at both a quick and a deliberately controlled tempo.
- *Psychological:* comfort deliberately slowing the game down when it's the correct choice.

PRACTICE 2 — TAKE YOUR TIME (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific technique of legally managing tempo near the touchline and corner areas — shielding the ball, using the width of the pitch, and controlled retention — within the Laws of the Game.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 24 x 18 m, with a marked corner-area zone
- **Players:** 2v1 in the corner zone
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as part of the practice
- **Team sizes:** 2 v 1
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the corner 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 retaining pair works to keep the ball inside the zone;

the presser works to win it

Practice walkthrough: A pair of players shields and retains the ball in a marked corner area against a single presser, using body shape, controlled touches, and support angles to keep the ball in play and use time legally, without resorting to deliberately kicking the ball out of play or other unfair-play tactics.

Rules: The ball must remain in play at all times; deliberately kicking it out of play scores a point against the retaining pair, exactly as an unnecessary caution would in a real match.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the shielding player's body shape and the supporting player's angle are the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is retention-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- The presser commits fully to a challenge → shield and turn away, using their momentum against them.
- The presser holds off → use controlled touches to run down time legally without forcing an unnecessary risk.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Shielding body shape and controlled ball retention under pressure.
Tactical	Understanding the legal boundary between managing tempo and unfair time-wasting.
Physical	Strength and balance to hold off a determined challenge.
Psychological	Composure under sustained, close pressure.
Communication & leadership	The supporting player calling clearly for the ball to keep the retaining pattern going.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made the shielding technique succeed or fail against a determined presser?
2. Where is the line between managing tempo legally and unfair play — why does that line matter?
3. What happened when the ball was needlessly kicked out of play?
4. How does this connect to Week 24 Tuesday's "safe or risky" recognition — is managing tempo just another form of that same judgement?

Progressions:

1. Add a second presser, testing whether the retaining pair can still manage the ball.
2. Reduce the corner zone, sharpening the technical demand.
3. Add a time limit the pair must retain the ball for before it can be played out.

Regressions:

1. Widen the corner zone for more space.
2. Allow the retaining pair a free pass out of the zone if genuinely under too much pressure.
3. Reduce the presser's intensity while the shielding technique is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The shielding player turns into the presser rather than away from them	Poor body shape or panic under close pressure	The ball is lost in a contested, unnecessary turn	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and demonstrate the correct shielding angle	Resume
The pair kicks the ball out of play to avoid pressure	Panic, or a mistaken belief that this is a legitimate tempo-management tactic	The ball leaves the zone unnecessarily	Stop	Short group intervention: clarify the legal boundary this practice teaches	Resume

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

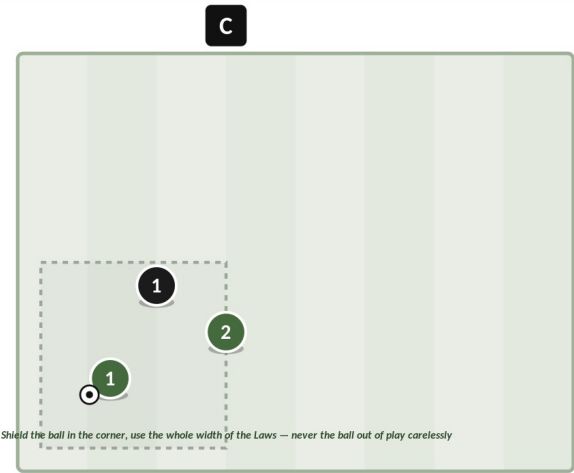
Success indicators:

- The pair retains the ball successfully against sustained pressure without conceding it or kicking it out unnecessarily.
- Shielding body shape improves visibly across the practice.
- Players can articulate the legal boundary this practice teaches.

Coach's eye: watch the shielding player's back and arms, not just their feet — a player using their whole body legally to protect the ball has understood the technique; a player relying only on foot skill under pressure has not.

H24.2 TAKE YOUR TIME — Managing Tempo Legally

24 x 18 m • 2v1 in the corner • shielding and controlled retention to manage the clock within the Laws of the Game • 15 minutes



● Team managing the clock ● Chasing team ● Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 24x18 metre area with dimension labels and a dashed corner zone. Two players in dark green bibs numbered 1 and 2 shielding the ball, one player in a black bib numbered 1 pressing. White football near a green player. Title: 'TAKE YOUR TIME — Managing Tempo Legally'. Subtitle: '24 x 18 m • 2v1 in the corner • shielding and controlled retention to manage the clock within the Laws of the Game • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training area near a corner flag, a green-bibbed player shielding the ball with strong body position against a black-bibbed presser, a second green-bibbed player supporting close by, coach centrally positioned observing the shielding technique closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training near a corner flag. A player in a dark green bib shielding the ball with strong body position against a player in a black bib pressing closely. A second player in a dark green bib supporting nearby. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the shielding technique. 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 — MANAGE THE CLOCK (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the individual tempo-control work into a full team practice, teaching the whole team to defend a lead for a fixed, scripted period, controlling restarts and tempo throughout while staying compact and organised.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 defending outfield + goalkeeper vs 8 chasing
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the defending team's goalkeeper controls the tempo of their own distribution, using legal time management on goal kicks and free kicks

- **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, with restart tempo deliberately coached

- **Coach position:** mobile, able to see the whole picture, tracking a visible countdown

- **Rotation method:** roles swap at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** the chasing team works to find an equaliser; the defending team works to see out the scripted period

Practice walkthrough: Eight defenders organise to see out a scripted period of play while notionally leading 1-0, applying Practice 2's individual tempo-control work collectively — controlling the speed of restarts, using legal shielding and retention when appropriate, and staying compact throughout rather than only in isolated defensive moments.

Rules: Standard positional practice rules; the defending team's success is judged by whether it reaches the end of the scripted period without conceding, using only legal tempo-management technique.

Tactical roles: the full tempo-control skill set from Practice 2, combined with the whole team's compact, coordinated shape from Week 21.

Decision-making triggers:

- The ball is safely in the defending team's control → use legal tempo management to run down time.
- The chasing team is applying genuine pressure → prioritise security and compactness over tempo control.

Communication language used: *Hold, Time, Safe, Squeeze.*

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean shielding, retention, and restart technique under a live, moving picture.
Tactical	Balancing legal tempo control against the genuine need for security when under pressure.
Physical	Controlled, situational intensity throughout the scripted period.
Psychological	Discipline to maintain the plan across a full period, not just isolated moments.
Communication & leadership	The goalkeeper and outfield leaders organising the team's tempo and shape out loud, continuously.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the team do well to control the tempo of the game during that period?
2. Was there a moment the team's discipline slipped, and what caused it?
3. How does this connect to Week 21's low-block work — is managing the clock partly about applying that same compact discipline for longer?
4. What is the difference between legitimately managing tempo and genuinely unfair time-wasting — did the team stay on the right side of that line throughout?

Progressions:

1. Extend the scripted period, testing whether the discipline holds under greater fatigue.
2. Reduce the warning given before the period ends, testing composure in the genuine closing moments.
3. Increase the chasing team's numbers temporarily to raise the pressure.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the chasing team's numbers temporarily, simplifying the picture.
2. Shorten the scripted period while the discipline is being learned.
3. Allow the coach to call "manage it" as a reminder while the habit is being built.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team's discipline slips in the final moments of the scripted period, taking unnecessary risks	Fatigue or impatience as the finish line approaches	A risky decision is attempted late in the period despite no genuine need	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
Restarts are taken carelessly quickly, handing the chasing team momentum	The team hasn't yet connected restart tempo to overall game management	Restarts are rushed even when a slower tempo would better serve the plan	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did we need to go that quickly there?"	Resume

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

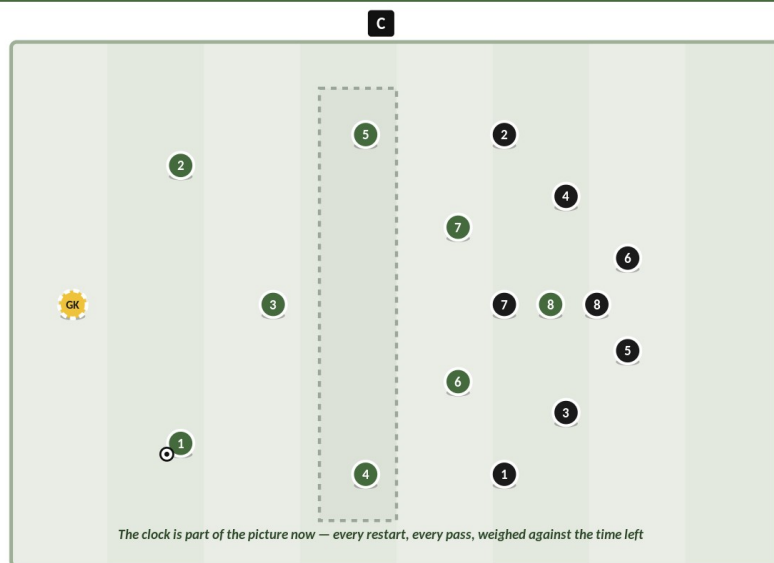
Success indicators:

- The team reaches the end of the scripted period without conceding, using legal technique throughout.
- Restart tempo is used deliberately, not carelessly.
- The team's discipline holds through the final moments of the period, not just the early ones.

Coach's eye: watch the final two minutes of any scripted period most closely — this is where composure is tested hardest, and where the habit either holds or breaks.

H24.3 MANAGE THE CLOCK — Seeing Out a Scripted Period

50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • defend a 1-0 lead for a fixed, scripted period, controlling restarts and tempo throughout • 15 minutes



● Team leading 1-0 ● Chasing team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball - - - Compact 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. A 50x34 metre area with dimension labels. A goalkeeper in yellow on the left. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 organised in a compact shape with a dashed reference line, and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. Title: 'MANAGE THE CLOCK — Seeing Out a Scripted Period'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • defend a 1-0 lead for a fixed, scripted period, controlling restarts and tempo throughout • 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 defending team organised near their own half, black-bibbed opponents pressing for an equaliser, the goalkeeper controlling the tempo of a restart, coach observing from a central, elevated vantage point with a visible stopwatch.

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 compact group of players in dark green bibs organised defensively. Players in black bibs pressing for an equaliser. A goalkeeper in yellow controlling the tempo of a restart. A coach observing from a central vantage point, holding a stopwatch. 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 — SEE IT OUT (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards a team for successfully defending a lead against a visible countdown clock, 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, a visible countdown

timer or clock

- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** nearest sideline
- **Coach position:** sideline, central, managing the visible countdown
- **Rotation method:** teams swap the leading role at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** both directions, one goal per end

Practice walkthrough: A 7v7 game in which one team is scripted as leading 1-0 against a visible countdown clock; that team wins outright if it reaches the end of the countdown without conceding, directly rewarding this week's central skill.

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

Tactical roles: the full tempo-control and game-management 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 shielding, retention, and restart technique under game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly balancing security and composure against the visible pressure of a countdown.
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 game management under real time pressure.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best example of "seeing it out" work?
2. What's one thing from this week — protecting a lead or managing the clock — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does composure under a countdown matter just as much as quality in open play?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the countdown time, sharpening the pressure.
2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase pressure late in the countdown.

Regressions:

1. Extend the countdown time if the group's confidence needs building gradually.
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 leading team panics as the countdown nears zero, taking unnecessary risks	Pressure of the visible countdown overwhelming composure	A risky decision is attempted in the final moments despite no genuine need	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did we need to do that with the clock that close?"	Resume
The leading team becomes so cautious it stops competing for the ball at all	Overcorrection under pressure	The team surrenders territory and possession unnecessarily	Stop	Short group intervention: "managing the clock still means playing — don't switch off"	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.

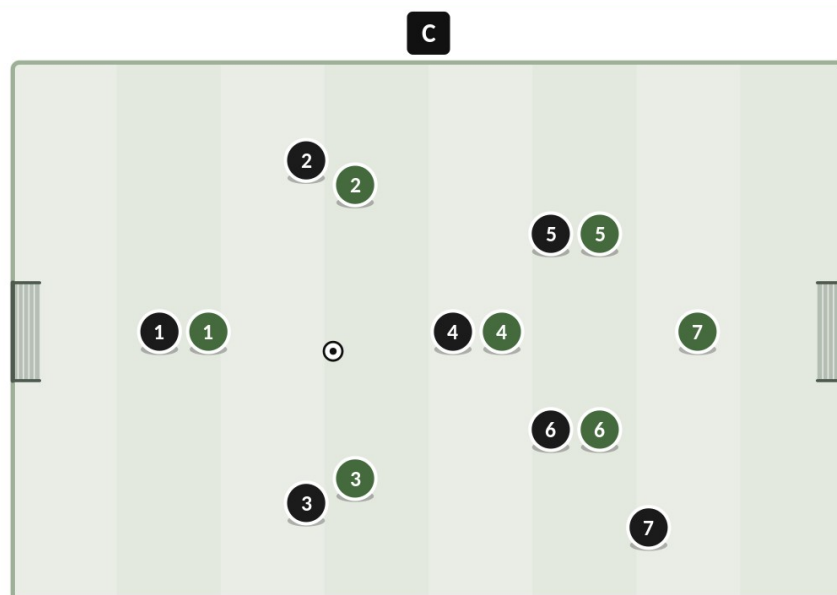
Success indicators:

- The leading team successfully sees out the countdown with increasing composure across repetitions.
- Legal tempo-management technique is used correctly under real pressure.
- 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.

H24.4 SEE IT OUT — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • one team defends a 1-0 lead against a countdown clock — hold it, win it • 17 minutes



● Team A (leading) ● Team B (chasing) ● Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x22 metre pitch with a full-size goal at each end. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and seven players in black bibs numbered 1–7 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. Title: 'SEE IT OUT — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v7 • one team defends a 1-0 lead against a countdown clock — hold it, win it • 17 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated sideline view of a lively 7v7 game, a green-bibbed player shielding the ball calmly in the corner as the final seconds of a visible countdown clock tick down, team-mates supporting 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 shielding the ball calmly in the corner area as team-mates support around them. Warm early-evening light, realistic grass pitch and long shadows, amateur adult players of varied build showing visible energy and composure. 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: "What's the difference between managing the clock well and just hoping the whistle comes?"

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Recognise the scoreline and time remaining as part of the picture, adjusting risk tolerance accordingly.
2. Retain possession securely in deep areas when protecting a lead, without abandoning the team's underlying identity.
3. Manage tempo and restarts legally in the closing stages, staying compact and organised throughout.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** provide the calm, secure retention option that protects a lead without unnecessary risk.
2. **Midfield unit:** recognise the game state and communicate the correct approach to the rest of the team.
3. **Front players:** support the game-management plan, including tracking back further and offering a legal shielding option when appropriate.

Individual role reminders:

- If we're winning late, take the safe option — it's not a lesser choice, it's the correct one.
- Manage tempo legally — shield and retain, never deliberately waste time in a way that risks a card.
- Stay switched on until the final whistle — composure, not panic, sees out a lead.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Number of turnovers in dangerous areas while protecting a lead.
- Whether the team's approach matched the actual scoreline and time remaining.
- Number of clean chances conceded in the closing ten minutes of matches the team is winning.
- Number of cautions or free kicks conceded through poor tempo management.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

Protecting a lead and managing the clock

STRUCTURE	HOW PROTECTING A LEAD IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	HOW MANAGING THE CLOCK IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	KEY RISK
4-3-3	Wide forwards track back further, supporting a numbers-up defensive picture without changing the formation	The goalkeeper and back four control the tempo of restarts, with full-backs offering legal shielding options in wide areas	The recognition-and-composure principle, regardless of formation	Wide forwards failing to track back, leaving full-backs exposed to a 2v1
3-4-3	Wing-backs sit slightly deeper, prioritising defensive solidity over their usual attacking width	The back three and goalkeeper control tempo, with wing-backs providing width for legal retention in the corners	The recognition-and-composure principle, regardless of formation	The back three being isolated if wing-backs push forward out of habit rather than reading the game state

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.