



Week 26 — Match Management

Tags: `red-card-scenarios` `compactness` `numerical-advantage` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	26 of 36
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Core principle	Compactness
Secondary principle	Overloads & rest defence
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Weeks 24-25 taught the team to read the scoreline and adjust risk accordingly. This week adds a different, rarer but higher-stakes picture: numerical imbalance. Tuesday teaches the team how to reorganise calmly and immediately from eleven players to ten after a red card, using compactness to close the numerical gap rather than simply working harder. Thursday teaches the mirror skill — playing against ten players — where the temptation to rush and overcommit is actually a bigger risk than the numerical disadvantage itself, and patient, disciplined use of the extra man is what actually turns the advantage into goals.
Formation-neutral explanation	Playing with or against ten players is not a formation change so much as a forced or gifted structural adjustment — every formation has a version of "who covers the gap" when a player is lost, and every formation has a version of "how do we use the spare body" when an opponent is reduced, and both are formation-neutral decision-making skills rather than fixed patterns.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 reduced to ten commonly drops to a back four with a front two becoming a lone striker, or a midfield three becoming a two, depending on which player was dismissed and what the game state demands. A 3-4-3 facing ten opponents might use its extra body to add a second passer in central areas rather than simply pushing an extra player forward, preserving defensive discipline while still pressing the advantage. Both examples show the same underlying skill — reorganising deliberately rather than reactively.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, check whether the group has actually faced a numerical imbalance recently — if not, this week is proactive preparation rather than a response to a specific gap; treat it as building a tool the team hasn't needed yet rather than fixing something broken.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team lost composure or shape after a red card, or failed to make the most of an opponent's dismissal, 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 naturally to reduced numbers — practising 10v11 and its mirror picture is straightforward to adapt to whatever attendance allows, since the whole week is already about playing with uneven numbers.

Tuesday — Session 51

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	51 of 72
Week	26
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Playing with ten players
Short summary	Teaches the team to reorganise calmly and immediately after going down to ten players, using a clear, rehearsed reshape and disciplined compactness to close the numerical gap, then applies the full picture inside a conditioned match played a player down for a scripted period.
Tags	`red-card-scenarios` `compactness` `reorganisation`
Primary learning objective	The team reorganises its shape immediately and calmly after losing a player, with everyone clear on their adjusted job.
Secondary learning objective	The team defends compactly with ten players, closing the numerical gap through shape rather than simply running harder.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: composure and shape maintained after a red card.
Expected tactical outcome	A visibly organised, compact shape within seconds of going down to ten players, rather than a period of visible confusion.
Expected physical load	Moderate — this is a decision-making and organisational theme, not a peak conditioning week.
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 reduced team's goalkeeper is specifically coached on the extra organisational responsibility that comes with a player down.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A full-width walkthrough area for Practice 2, narrowing for Practice 3, returning to full size for Practice 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 3 reduces proportionally, e.g. 8v9; Practice 4 becomes 6v7.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v10.
Contingency — restricted space	Reduce Practice 2 and Practice 4 proportionally; the reorganisation principle survives at any scale.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

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

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Cover for Two</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Ten Men Compact</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Backs Against It</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — INSTANT RESHAPE (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of instant, calm reorganisation when a group suddenly loses a player, before any tactical structure is added.

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

Walkthrough: A rondo group plays normally until the coach calls a player out entirely without warning; the remaining group must reorganise its spacing instantly to maintain the practice's basic shape and function.

Rules: The removed player must be replaced functionally — by spacing, not by someone new stepping in — within five seconds.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean spacing adjustment under a sudden change.
- *Psychological:* calm, immediate reorganisation rather than panic or confusion.

PRACTICE 2 — COVER FOR TWO (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Installs the club's specific, rehearsed reshape from eleven players to ten, so that if a red card occurs on Saturday, the team already knows exactly what its new shape looks like rather than improvising under pressure.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 44 x 30 m
- **Players:** 10 outfield players in a shadow-play walkthrough, no opposition
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, since the reshape's defensive organisation includes the goalkeeper's adjusted role

- **Team sizes:** 10 (shape only)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for reference positions
- **Starting positions:** the team's normal eleven-player shape, minus one nominated position, as shown in the diagram

- **Ball supply:** 1 ball, used to walk through realistic possession sequences
- **Restart:** coach resets the walkthrough as needed
- **Coach position:** central, able to see the whole picture
- **Rotation method:** the "missing" position rotates through several realistic red-card scenarios (a centre-back, a striker, a winger) across the practice

- **Direction of play:** standard, walked through at low intensity

Practice walkthrough: The team rehearses its rehearsed reshape for going down to ten players, tested against several different realistic scenarios — the specific reorganisation looks different depending on which position is lost. A dismissed striker typically means the team drops to one central striker with a midfielder covering the gap; a dismissed wide player typically means the front line narrows and a full-back provides extra width; a dismissed centre-back typically means a holding midfielder drops in. Each scenario is walked through calmly and repeated until it's instant.

Rules: Walkthrough intensity throughout; the emphasis is on correctness and speed of recognition, not physical output.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* whichever player is asked to cover an additional job (a second striker's role, extra defensive cover) is the specific technical focus for that scenario.
- *Unit:* the whole team's spacing and distances between lines change with the reshape.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is organisational, not phase-specific.

Decision-making triggers:

- A specific position is lost → the team applies its rehearsed reshape for that position, not an improvised one.
- The lost position doesn't match a rehearsed scenario exactly → the team applies the closest rehearsed principle and adapts.

Communication language used: *Show, Cover, Squeeze* — plus a new, specific call for confirming the reshape ("Ten shape, [name]'s covering [role]").

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean positional understanding of the new job each reshape requires.
Tactical	Recognising which rehearsed reshape applies to which lost position.

CORNER	POINT
Physical	Not applicable — walkthrough intensity.
Psychological	Calm, confident recognition rather than panic.
Communication & leadership	The team confirming the reshape out loud, by name, immediately.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What changes about the team's shape when a striker is lost, versus a centre-back?
2. Why does having a rehearsed plan matter more in this specific situation than in most others?
3. Who is best suited to each of the "extra job" roles in the reshape, and why?
4. How does this connect to Week 20's front-player shape work — is dropping from two strikers to one the same skill applied under a different trigger?

Progressions:

1. Add live, passive opposition to test the reshape under some pressure.
2. Reduce the time allowed to reorganise and confirm the reshape verbally.
3. Combine two scenarios in sequence (a red card followed by a tactical substitution) to test adaptability.

Regressions:

1. Walk through each scenario slowly, position by position, before adding any pace.
2. Reduce the number of scenarios rehearsed in a single session.
3. Allow the coach to call out the correct reshape while it's being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Players are unsure which rehearsed reshape applies to a given lost position	The scenario hasn't been rehearsed enough times to be automatic	Hesitation or conflicting positional instructions after the "dismissal"	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify which reshape applies	Resume
The team reorganises correctly in shape but doesn't confirm it verbally	The calling habit hasn't been established yet	Correct positioning with no vocal confirmation	Let it flow with a drive-by call	Direct reminder to call the reshape by name	Continue

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since installing a specific, repeatable reshape is the entire teaching point.

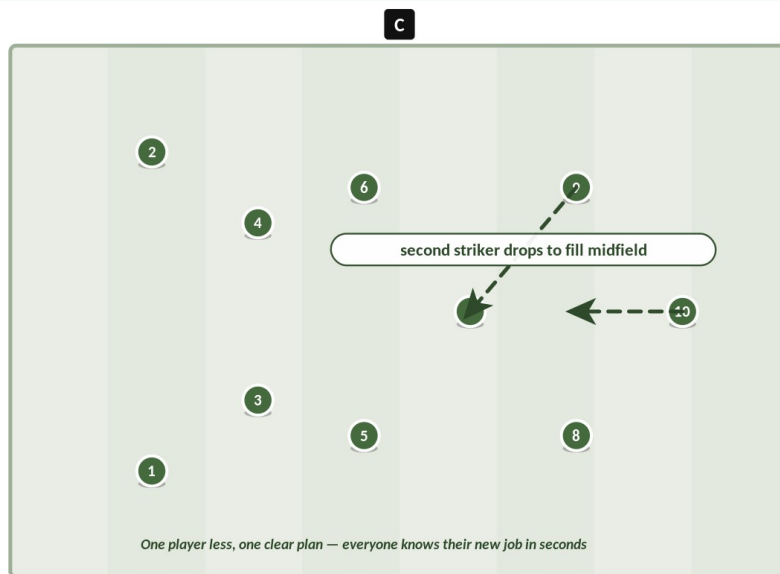
Success indicators:

- The team reorganises correctly within seconds for each rehearsed scenario.
- The reshape is confirmed verbally, by name, each time.
- Players can explain why their specific job changed for a given scenario.

Coach's eye: watch the speed of recognition, not just the final shape — a team that gets there quickly and calmly has actually learned the lesson; a team that eventually arrives at the correct shape after visible confusion has not yet.

T26.2 COVER FOR TWO — Reshaping After a Red Card

44 x 30 m · shadow-play walkthrough · the team reorganises from eleven shapes to ten, instantly and calmly · 15 minutes



● Team reshaping to ten ➔ Reorganisation movement

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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 44x30 metre area with dimension labels. Ten players in dark green bibs numbered 1-10 organised in a reshaped defensive and attacking structure. A curved dashed line showing one player dropping from a forward position into a covering midfield role. Title: 'COVER FOR TWO — Reshaping After a Red Card'. Subtitle: '44 x 30 m · shadow-play walkthrough · the team reorganises from eleven shapes to ten, instantly and calmly · 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, ten green-bibbed players walking calmly through a reorganised shape, one player visibly dropping from an attacking position into a covering midfield role, coach centrally positioned observing and organising the walkthrough.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated wide three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Ten players in dark green bibs walking calmly through a reorganised team shape. One player visibly moving from an attacking position into a deeper, covering midfield role. A coach standing centrally, calmly organising the walkthrough with a clipboard. 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 — TEN MEN COMPACT (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the rehearsed reshape into a genuine, live 10v11 game, teaching the team of ten to defend compactly and close the numerical gap through shape and discipline rather than simply working harder than the opponent.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 26 m
- **Players:** 9 outfield (team of ten, including goalkeeper) vs 10 outfield (full team, including goalkeeper) — scaled from the full 10v11 picture
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play fully, with the ten-player team's goalkeeper carrying extra organisational responsibility
- **Team sizes:** 9 v 10 (plus goalkeepers, giving a genuine 10v11 picture)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers, a marked compact-block reference line for the team of ten
- **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:** teams swap the reduced role at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** possession and progression, both directions

Practice walkthrough: The team of ten applies Practice 2's rehearsed reshape and is coached to defend in a deliberately tight, compact block, closing down the space the extra opponent would otherwise exploit, rather than trying to match the fuller team's spread across the whole pitch.

Rules: Standard possession rules; the team of ten is specifically coached on maintaining its compact reference line throughout.

Tactical roles: the full reshape skill set from Practice 2, now applied live against a genuine numerical disadvantage.

Decision-making triggers:

- The ball is central → the compact block holds its narrow shape, accepting some width being conceded.
- The ball is wide → the block shifts as a unit, without stretching itself thin trying to cover the whole pitch.

Communication language used: *Show, Cover, Squeeze* — plus the specific reshape confirmation call from Practice 2.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean defensive technique under sustained numerical disadvantage.
Tactical	Maintaining compactness rather than trying to cover the whole pitch with fewer players.
Physical	Efficient, well-organised movement rather than simply running more than the opponent.
Psychological	Composure and belief that organisation, not effort alone, closes the numerical gap.
Communication & leadership	The team of ten organising its compact block out loud, continuously.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the team of ten give up deliberately in order to stay compact?

2. What happened when the block tried to stretch to cover the whole pitch instead of staying compact?
3. How does this connect to Week 21's low-block work — is defending with ten players simply that same discipline applied to a numerical disadvantage?
4. What did the fuller team have to do differently to break down a genuinely compact team of ten?

Progressions:

1. Extend the practice's duration, testing whether the compact discipline holds under fatigue.
2. Add a genuine attacking direction and target zone for the team of ten on a regain.
3. Reduce the practice area, raising the intensity of both teams' pictures.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the fuller team's numbers temporarily, simplifying the picture.
2. Widen the practice area for more time.
3. Allow the coach to call "hold the line" as a reminder while the discipline is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team of ten tries to cover the whole pitch, stretching itself too thin	Instinct to match the fuller team's spread rather than accepting a deliberately compact trade-off	Gaps appear throughout the shape rather than staying concentrated centrally	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The team of ten's compactness holds but their effort visibly drops, believing the game is already lost	Discouragement at facing a numerical disadvantage	Reduced work-rate despite good organisation	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "does good shape mean we stop competing?"	Resume

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

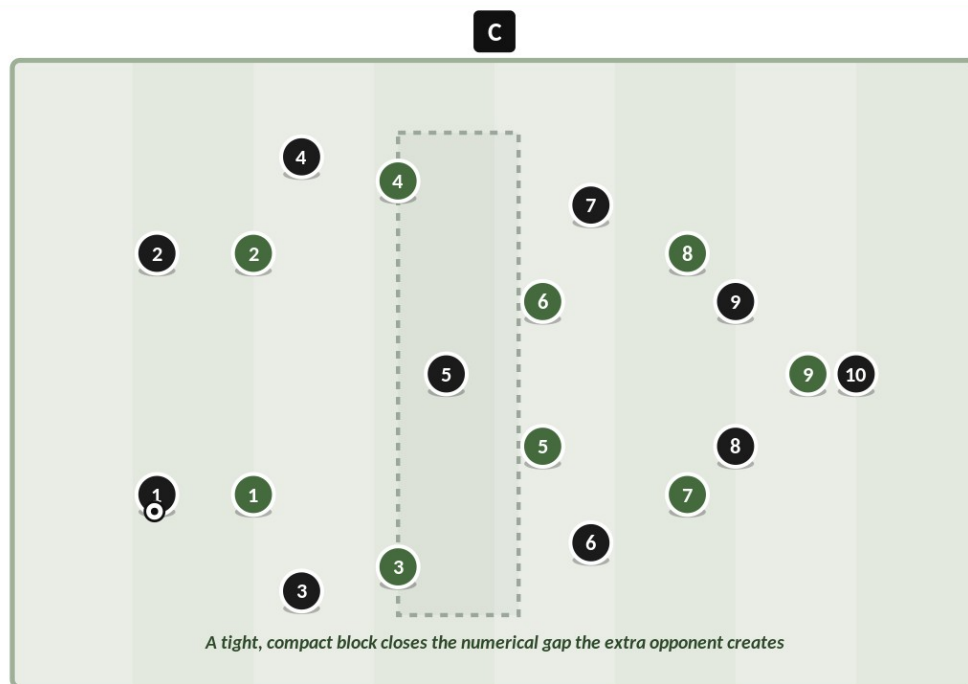
Success indicators:

- The team of ten maintains a visibly compact shape throughout the practice.
- The fuller team's clean chances are limited despite its numerical advantage.
- The team of ten continues competing with genuine effort within its organised shape.

Coach's eye: watch for a team that stays compact and still competes hard within that shape — the lesson here is "organised and committed," not "organised instead of committed."

T26.3 TEN MEN COMPACT — Small-Sided Game

40 x 26 m • 10v11 • stay compact and disciplined defending with a player less • 15 minutes



● Team of ten ● Full team ● 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 40x26 metre area with dimension labels and a dashed compact block reference line. Nine players in dark green bibs numbered 1–9 organised in a tight, compact shape, and ten players in black bibs numbered 1–10 spread more widely across the area. White football near a black player. Title: 'TEN MEN COMPACT — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '40 x 26 m • 10v11 • stay compact and disciplined defending with a player less • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training area, a tightly organised green-bibbed team of ten holding a compact defensive shape, a fuller black-bibbed team spread wider across the pitch in possession, coach on the touchline tracking the compactness closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. A tightly organised group of players in dark green bibs holding a compact defensive shape. A larger group of players in black bibs spread more widely across the pitch in possession. A coach on the touchline, closely tracking the compactness of the smaller group. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture, amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 4 — BACKS AGAINST IT (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, scripting one team to play a full period with ten players against a full eleven, applying the week's reshape and compactness principles under realistic, sustained match pressure.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 15 outfield + 2 goalkeepers (one team of 7 outfield + GK, one team of 8 outfield + GK)
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the reduced team's goalkeeper carries the extra organisational responsibility rehearsed in Practice 2
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 8 (plus goalkeepers, giving a genuine 8v9 picture proportional to a full 10v11)
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 8 flat markers, corner cones
- **Starting positions:** the reduced team's rehearsed reshape from Practice 2
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** match-realistic restarts
- **Coach position:** touchline, halfway line, mobile
- **Rotation method:** teams swap the reduced role at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** standard, both teams attack opposite goals

Practice walkthrough: One team plays the full 15 minutes with a genuine numerical disadvantage, applying its rehearsed reshape and compact defensive discipline under sustained match pressure, while also being coached that a numerical disadvantage doesn't mean abandoning any attacking ambition entirely.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules.

Tactical roles: the full reshape and compactness 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, plus this week's specific reshape-confirmation call.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution under full match pressure and fatigue, with a genuine numerical disadvantage.
Tactical	Sustained compactness and organisation across a full period, not just isolated moments.
Physical	Efficient, well-organised movement rather than simply working harder throughout.
Psychological	Composure and resilience under sustained pressure.
Communication & leadership	The reduced team organising and confirming its shape out loud, continuously.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team of ten's organisation holding up under real pressure tonight?
2. Where did the compact shape come closest to breaking down?
3. How does this connect to Week 15's compactness work — is this simply that same discipline under its hardest test yet?

4. What did the fuller team have to do differently to break down a genuinely well-organised team of ten?

Progressions:

1. Extend the practice's duration to test sustained discipline under fatigue.
2. Introduce a genuine scoreline scenario combining this week's theme with Weeks 24–25's game-management principles.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the fuller team's intensity while the recognition skill is being consolidated.
2. Reintroduce Practice 2's shadow-play walkthrough briefly if the reduced team's organisation has broken down.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The reduced team's compactness holds early but fades as fatigue sets in	Genuine physical demand of maintaining organisation with fewer players over a sustained period	The shape stretches or loses its compact line as the practice continues	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The reduced team abandons any attacking ambition entirely, playing purely defensively	Overcorrection — treating the numerical disadvantage as a reason to stop competing offensively	No attacking threat is offered even when a genuine opportunity exists	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "does ten men mean we can't threaten at all?"	Resume

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

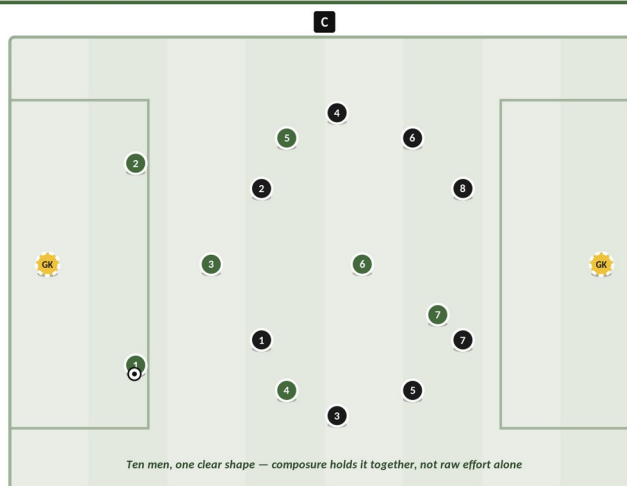
Success indicators:

- The reduced team's compact organisation holds for the full scripted period.
- The reduced team offers genuine attacking threat when the opportunity arises, not just pure defence.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, specific moments where the reshape and compactness held up well.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of whether Tuesday's teaching has transferred — judge it specifically against whether the organisation holds under sustained fatigue, not just in the opening minutes.

T26.4 BACKS AGAINST IT — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) · 8v9 + GKs (7v8 outfield) · one team plays a full period a player down, applying the week's reshape and compactness · 15 minutes



● Team of ten ● Full 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. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1-7 organised compactly, and eight players in black bibs numbered 1-8 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. Title: 'BACKS AGAINST IT — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) · 8v9 + GKs (7v8 outfield) · one team plays a full period a player down, applying the week's reshape and compactness · 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 conditioned match, a compact, organised green-bibbed team defending with genuine composure against a fuller black-bibbed team, 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 conditioned football match on a half-size grass pitch with full-size goals and goalkeepers in yellow at each end. A compact, organised group of players in dark green bibs defending with visible composure. A larger group of players in black bibs pressing the attack. 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 go down to ten on Saturday, what's the first thing we do — and who says it out loud?"

Thursday — Session 52

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	52 of 72
Week	26
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Playing against ten players
Short summary	Teaches the team to use a numerical advantage patiently and with genuine quality, avoiding the common trap of rushing or overcommitting, while maintaining defensive discipline throughout, since the opponent's numerical disadvantage does not remove the need for basic rest defence.
Tags	`numerical-advantage` `overloads` `discipline`
Primary learning objective	The team uses a numerical advantage with patience and quality, rather than rushing low-percentage attempts simply because the extra man exists.
Secondary learning objective	Defensive discipline and rest defence are maintained throughout, even against a numerically reduced opponent.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: composure and shape maintained after a red card — from the opposing side's perspective, the team's own composure in exploiting the advantage.
Expected tactical outcome	More clean chances converted from a numerical advantage, with no corresponding rise in chances conceded from a careless turnover.
Expected physical load	Moderate — this is a decision-making and composure theme rather than a peak conditioning week.
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, with the advantaged team's goalkeeper coached on maintaining calm distribution rather than rushing simply because of the numerical picture.
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 proportionally, e.g. 7v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 3 can extend to 9v8.
Contingency — restricted space	Practice 2 works in any area with cones marking the 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, Extra Body</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Use the Extra Man</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Patient Overload</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Make It Count</i>	Black
0:59–1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — PATIENT HANDS, EXTRA BODY (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces the habit of using a numerical advantage patiently rather than rushing simply because the option exists, before any tactical structure is added.

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

Walkthrough: Rondo-style possession with a genuine numerical advantage built in; the group must complete a minimum number of quality passes before attempting to use the extra player, rehearsing patience even when the advantage is obvious.

Rules: The extra player may not be used until at least four passes have been completed.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean, unhurried passing technique.
- *Psychological:* patience — resisting the urge to force the extra player immediately just because they're available.

PRACTICE 2 — USE THE EXTRA MAN (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific decision-making skill of using a genuine numerical advantage with quality — recognising when the extra player is a real opportunity versus when forcing it is actually a worse option than a simpler alternative.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 6 attackers vs 5 defenders
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 5
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions
- **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 and progression toward a target end

Practice walkthrough: Six attackers face five defenders, and are coached to recognise the genuine moment the extra player is a clean, high-quality option, rather than forcing the connection the instant the numerical advantage is visible. A clean, well-timed use of the extra player scores more highly than a rushed, low-percentage attempt that happens to reach them.

Rules: Standard possession-to-target rules; a considered, clean use of the extra player scores a bonus point, while a rushed attempt that is intercepted scores against the attacking team.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the extra player's own patience in finding the right moment to receive is as important as the passer's decision.
- *Unit:* the whole group's spacing must create a genuine, clean picture for the extra player, not just a numerical one.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- The extra player is genuinely free and the pass is clean → use them immediately.
- The extra player is technically free but the pass is contested or low-quality → continue circulating patiently instead.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean, considered passing technique to find the extra player.
Tactical	Distinguishing a genuine opportunity from a forced one.
Physical	Controlled, patient movement rather than rushed positioning.
Psychological	Discipline to wait for genuine quality rather than settling for numerical presence alone.
Communication & leadership	The extra player calling clearly only when genuinely in a clean, useful position.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made a use of the extra player "genuine quality" versus "forced"?
2. What happened when the team rushed to use the extra player unnecessarily?
3. Why might patience actually be harder than urgency when a numerical advantage is obvious?
4. How does this connect to Week 24's lead-protection work — is this the same "safe versus risky" judgement, just applied to a numerical advantage rather than a scoreline?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine defensive transition consequence if a forced attempt at the extra player is intercepted.
2. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the decision.
3. Add a condition requiring the use of the extra player to end in a shot or clean break.

Regressions:

1. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
2. Reduce the defending team to four players temporarily.
3. Allow the coach to call out when the extra player is genuinely available while the recognition skill is being built.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team forces the ball into the extra player regardless of whether the pass is genuinely clean	The numerical advantage is treated as automatic permission rather than a genuine opportunity to assess	The pass to the extra player is regularly contested or intercepted	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify what "genuine quality" looks like	Resume
The team never uses the extra player at all, over-cautious to the point of wasting the advantage	Overcorrection after learning the patience principle	The extra player remains unused even when genuinely, cleanly available	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that extra player really open there, and did we use them?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since precise judgement between genuine and forced opportunities is the entire teaching point.

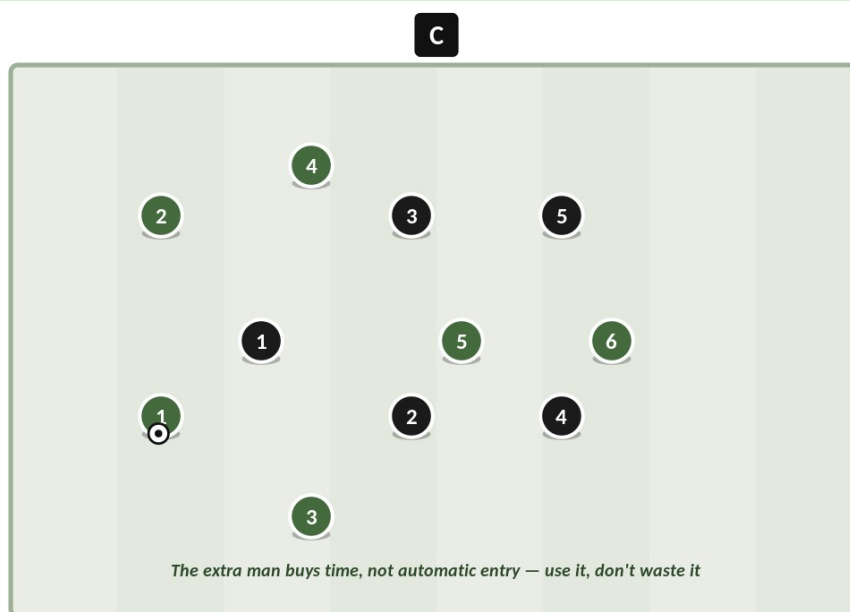
Success indicators:

- The team distinguishes genuine opportunities from forced ones with increasing accuracy.
- Clean, quality use of the extra player increases as the practice progresses.
- Rushed, intercepted attempts decrease across the practice.

Coach's eye: watch the moment just before the pass to the extra player is made — composure and a clear picture in the passer's eyes suggest a genuine decision; hurriedness suggests the numerical advantage is being chased rather than used.

H26.2 USE THE EXTRA MAN — Quality Over the Overload

34 x 22 m • 6v5 • use the extra player with genuine quality, not just extra numbers • 15 minutes



● Team with the extra man ● Team of ten ⊙ Ball

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 26 • 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. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6 and five players in black bibs numbered 1–5 spread across the area. White football near a green player. Title: 'USE THE EXTRA MAN — Quality Over the Overload'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 6v5 • use the extra player with genuine quality, not just extra numbers • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training area, six green-bibbed players patiently circulating the ball against five black-bibbed defenders, one green player clearly and calmly free, receiving a well-weighted pass, 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. Six players in dark green bibs patiently circulating the ball against five players in black bibs. One green-bibbed player clearly free, calmly receiving a well-weighted pass. 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 — PATIENT OVERLOAD (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the individual decision-making work into a full team practice, teaching the whole team to build a numerical-advantage attack patiently while maintaining genuine defensive discipline throughout, since a numerical advantage does not remove the need for basic rest defence against a live opponent.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 attacking outfield + goalkeeper vs 7 defending outfield
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the attacking team's goalkeeper distributes calmly, helping build the patient overload rather than rushing distribution

- **Team sizes:** 8 + GK v 7
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions and a marked rest-defence discipline zone

- **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 build patiently and break the 10-player picture down; the defending team of seven holds a compact, disciplined shape and looks to break on a turnover

Practice walkthrough: Eight attackers build patiently against seven defenders, a proportional numerical advantage matching the full-team 11v10 picture, while a clearly named minimal group maintains rest-defence discipline throughout — the numerical advantage is not treated as licence to abandon defensive responsibility entirely.

Rules: Standard positional practice rules; a clean, patient attacking sequence that ends in a genuine chance scores a bonus point for the attacking team; a clean break from a turnover scores a bonus point for the defending team of seven.

Tactical roles: the full patience-and-quality skill set from Practice 2, combined with a team-wide, disciplined structure.

Decision-making triggers:

- The extra player and genuine quality are both present → use the advantage decisively.
- The picture isn't genuinely clean yet → continue patient circulation rather than forcing it.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean, patient combination technique under a genuine numerical advantage.
Tactical	Balancing patient build-up against the discipline to maintain rest defence throughout.
Physical	Controlled, sustained possession rather than rushed, high-intensity attempts.
Psychological	Discipline to remain patient even when an obvious numerical advantage exists.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and confirming who holds rest-defence responsibility, continuously.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did the team do well to remain patient despite the obvious numerical advantage?

2. Who held rest-defence responsibility during that practice, and was it always clear?
3. How does this connect to Week 13's overloads-and-rest-defence work — is this the same trade-off, now applied to a numerical advantage rather than a deliberate risk?
4. What did the team of seven do to make the most of any turnover they won?

Progressions:

1. Add a genuine, live counter-attacking target for the defending team of seven on a turnover.
2. Reduce the numerical advantage temporarily (7v7) to sharpen the value of patience without an obvious extra body.
3. Add a time constraint, simulating a specific period of a match.

Regressions:

1. Increase the numerical advantage temporarily while the patience principle is being learned.
2. Reduce the defending team of seven's intensity while the recognition skill is being consolidated.
3. Allow the coach to call out when the picture is genuinely ready while the habit is being built.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The attacking team rushes its build-up simply because the numerical advantage exists	The advantage is treated as automatic permission to force the picture	Low-percentage attempts increase despite no genuine urgency	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
No player is clearly responsible for rest-defence, and the team is caught open on a turnover	Diffusion of responsibility when the numerical advantage feels safe	A clean break is conceded with no defender in position to stop it	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify who holds rest-defence responsibility	Resume

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

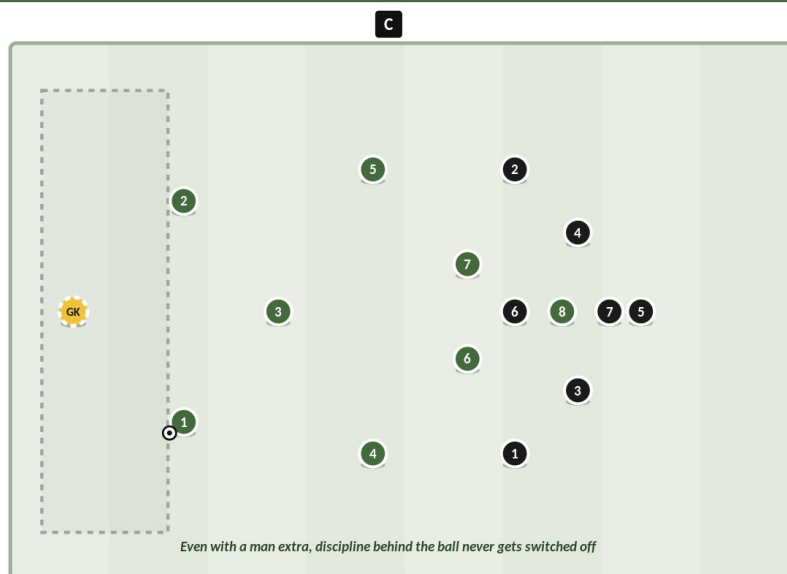
Success indicators:

- The attacking team builds patiently, using the numerical advantage decisively only when the picture is genuinely clean.
- Rest-defence responsibility is clearly named and held throughout.
- Clean chances created increase without a corresponding rise in clean breaks conceded.

Coach's eye: watch for a team that looks unhurried even with an obvious numerical advantage — genuine composure under a favourable picture is a harder skill than composure under pressure, and it's the specific thing this practice teaches.

H26.3 PATIENT OVERLOAD — Discipline Against Ten

50 x 34 m · 8v7 + GK · build the overload patiently, keeping defensive discipline rather than over-committing · 15 minutes



● Team with the extra man ● Team of ten ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ■ Rest-defence discipline zone

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · Week 26 · 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 and a dashed rest-defence discipline zone marked near the attacking team's own goal. A goalkeeper in yellow on the left. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 building patiently, with one green player clearly positioned inside the marked discipline zone, and seven players in black bibs numbered 1–7 organised compactly. White football near a green player. Title: 'PATIENT OVERLOAD — Discipline Against Ten'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m · 8v7 + GK · build the overload patiently, keeping defensive discipline rather than over-committing · 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 patient, calm green-bibbed attacking team building possession with one player visible holding a deep, disciplined position, a compact black-bibbed team of seven defending organised, 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 patient, calm group of players in dark green bibs building possession, with one player visible holding a deep, disciplined defensive position. A smaller, compact group of players in black bibs defending in an organised shape. 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 — MAKE IT COUNT (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards a goal built from patient, quality overload play, 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
- **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:** teams swap the advantaged role at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** both directions, one goal per end

Practice walkthrough: A 7v6 game in which the team with the numerical advantage is rewarded double for a goal built from at least four passes of patient, quality build-up, directly rewarding this week's central skill over simply forcing the numerical advantage.

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

Tactical roles: the full patience-and-discipline 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, patient combination technique under game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly identifying genuine quality opportunities rather than forcing the numerical advantage.
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 patient, disciplined play.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best patient-build-up goal work?
2. What's one thing from this week — playing with ten or against ten — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does patience matter just as much as the numerical advantage itself?

Progressions:

1. Increase the minimum pass count required before a goal counts double.

2. Add a genuine offside line.
3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase the discipline required.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the minimum pass 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 5v4 for more individual involvement.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team rushes to reach the minimum pass count mechanically, rather than playing with genuine quality	The condition is chased rather than played naturally	Passes are hurried or low-quality simply to reach the threshold	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "were those passes actually good, or just enough?"	Resume
The team avoids attacking altogether, overly cautious about the condition	Caution or lack of confidence after an earlier correction	No genuine attempts at goal even when the picture clearly allows one	Stop	Short group intervention: "we still need to score — patience doesn't mean passivity"	Resume

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

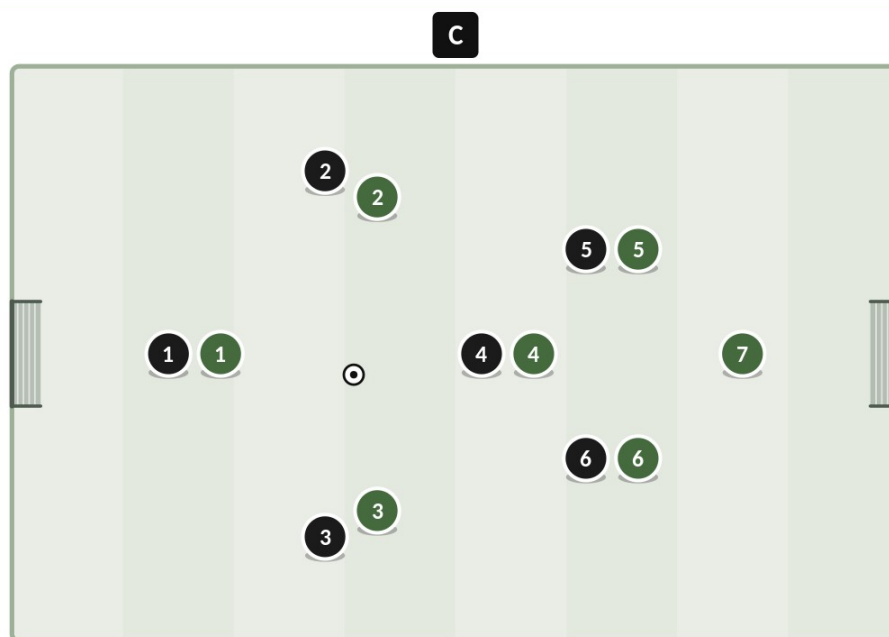
Success indicators:

- Goals following genuine, patient quality build-up increase across the practice.
- The team distinguishes real quality from mechanical pass-counting.
- 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.

H26.4 MAKE IT COUNT — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v6 • a goal built from patient, quality overload play is worth double • 17 minutes



● Team A (extra man) ● Team B (ten) ● 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 six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. Title: 'MAKE IT COUNT — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v6 • a goal built from patient, quality overload play 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 team calmly working the ball through several patient passes before a composed finish, black-bibbed defenders well organised despite being outnumbered, 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 team of players in dark green bibs calmly working the ball through several patient passes before a composed shot on goal. Players in black bibs organised defensively despite being outnumbered. 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 the opposition go down to ten on Saturday, what's our plan — and what do we promise ourselves we won't do?"

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Reorganise immediately and calmly into the rehearsed reshape if the team goes down to ten players.
2. Defend compactly with ten players, closing the numerical gap through shape rather than raw effort alone.
3. If facing ten opponents, use the numerical advantage patiently, maintaining rest-defence discipline throughout.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** organise and confirm the reshape immediately if a player is lost, and provide calm, unhurried distribution when facing a reduced opponent.
2. **Midfield unit:** cover the specific rehearsed roles created by the reshape, and recognise genuine quality opportunities when facing a reduced opponent.
3. **Front players:** adjust to a reduced front-player picture calmly if required, and avoid forcing low-percentage attempts simply because a numerical advantage exists.

Individual role reminders:

- If we go down to ten, know your rehearsed reshape job and confirm it out loud immediately.
- If we're facing ten, use the extra option only when it's genuinely clean — patience is the harder, correct choice.
- A numerical advantage never means switching off defensively — know who's holding rest defence.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Time taken to reorganise into a compact, confirmed shape after a numerical change.
- Number of clean chances conceded while defending with ten players.
- Number of clean chances created and converted from a numerical advantage.
- Number of turnovers caused by forcing a numerical advantage rather than waiting for genuine quality.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

Playing with and against ten players

STRUCTURE	HOW PLAYING WITH TEN IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	HOW PLAYING AGAINST TEN IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	KEY RISK
4-3-3	Commonly drops to a back four with a lone striker, or a midfield three becoming a two, depending on the position lost	The extra man is used to add a second, patient passer centrally rather than simply pushing a player forward	The reshape-and-compactness principle, and the patience-and-discipline principle	Reorganising too slowly after a dismissal, leaving a visible period of disorganisation
3-4-3	Commonly holds the back three but reduces to a front two or drops a wing-back into a back four, depending on the position lost	The extra man supports central overloads while wing-backs maintain defensive discipline rather than both committing forward	The reshape-and-compactness principle, and the patience-and-discipline principle	Both wing-backs committing forward simultaneously against ten opponents, leaving the back three exposed to a fast break

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.