



Week 28 — Match Management

Tags: `game-management` `scripted-scenarios` `full-squad-practice` `phase-synthesis`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	28 of 36
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Core principle	All transition principles
Secondary principle	All possession principles
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Weeks 24–27 taught the individual pieces of match management — protecting a lead, chasing a game, playing with or against ten, managing momentum, controlling restarts. Week 28 compresses all of it into the single most consequential window of any match: the final five minutes. Tuesday scripts the team into a genuine, realistic final five minutes while leading, drawing primarily on transition principles — regaining possession instantly, killing danger, and managing the picture with composure. Thursday scripts the mirror picture, chasing an equaliser in the final five minutes, drawing primarily on possession principles — quality, patient combination under real time pressure, not just numbers thrown forward.
Formation-neutral explanation	The final five minutes test the accumulated match-management skill built across the whole of Phase 5 and, in truth, the whole season — no formation matters as much in this window as the team's shared composure, communication, and correct application of whichever specific skill (Weeks 24–27) the moment calls for.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 team in the final five minutes leading might briefly narrow its front three defensively, prioritising numbers behind the ball; the same team chasing a goal might commit both full-backs forward simultaneously, accepting real risk for real reward. A 3-4-3 team doing the same might ask a wing-back to tuck into a back four when leading, or push both wing-backs high when chasing. In both cases, the underlying formation label is far less important than whether the team applies the correct match-management principle for the specific five minutes it's actually in.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, check specifically what happened in the final five minutes of recent fixtures, win, loss, or draw — this week's practices are the most direct test yet of whether Phase 5's teaching holds under the most realistic pressure available in training. Name any specific evidence, good or concerning.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team has struggled specifically in the closing minutes of matches — dropping points from winning positions, or failing to find something when chasing — this week answers it directly at full intensity.

Route C — Attendance, facilities or player availability are disrupted. Both scripted scenarios scale to reduced numbers — the underlying composure-under- pressure skill matters more than rehearsing every scenario at full numbers every week.

Tuesday — Session 55

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	55 of 72
Week	28
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Final-five-minutes scenarios (winning)
Short summary	Compresses Weeks 24–27's game-management teaching into a realistic, scripted final five minutes while leading, emphasising the transition principles that keep a lead intact — instant regains, killing danger, and composed management of every restart and stoppage in the closing window.
Tags	`game-management` `transition` `scripted-scenarios`
Primary learning objective	The team applies transition principles — instant regains, quick recovery of shape — with real urgency in a genuine final-five-minutes picture while leading.
Secondary learning objective	Every specific skill from Weeks 24–27 (secure retention, compact defending, momentum management, restart control) is available and used correctly, not just the most recently trained one.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: composed game management late on.
Expected tactical outcome	The team sees out a genuine, scripted final five minutes leading without conceding a clean chance.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high, match-specific — this week's practices are deliberately realistic in intensity, matching what a genuine final five minutes actually demands.
Recommended intensity	7.5–8.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; in Practice 4 the leading team's goalkeeper carries the full weight of the organisational responsibility built across Weeks 24–27.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A moderate transition zone for Practice 2, narrowing for Practice 3, returning to full size for Practice 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 3 reduces to 6v5; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	All three practices scale proportionally; the composure-under-pressure principle survives at any scale.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00-0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Clock Watch</i>	Light green
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>The Last Ball</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Five to Go</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Play It Out</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — CLOCK WATCH (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces a genuine sense of time pressure before any tactical structure is added, sharpening awareness of a visible countdown.

Organisation: 20 x 16 m grid, small groups, with a visible countdown timer. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully.

Walkthrough: Rondo-style possession played against a visible countdown clock; the group must maintain possession security as the numbers on the clock get smaller, rehearsing the composure this week's teaching depends on.

Rules: A turnover in the final 30 seconds of the countdown counts double.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean, composed technique under a visible, ticking clock.
- *Psychological:* comfort with genuine time pressure rather than avoidance of it.

PRACTICE 2 — THE LAST BALL (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific transition skill of the nearest player reacting instantly to a lost ball, killing danger before it can develop, the foundation of protecting a lead in the game's most pressured window.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 26 m
- **Players:** 6 attackers (leading team) vs 4 pressers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as part of the leading team
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 4
- **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 within the zone

Practice walkthrough: The leading team retains possession against four pressers; whenever possession is lost, the practice's central rule fires — the nearest player to the loss must react and close it down instantly, before the danger can develop, echoing Week 27's "nearest players react first" principle applied specifically to a transition moment under a genuine lead.

Rules: If the nearest player closes down within two seconds of a turnover, the practice resumes with possession returned; if not, the pressing team scores a bonus point.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* the nearest player's instant reaction is the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* the rest of the group must recover shape behind the immediate reaction.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* this is a transition-focused practice throughout — the moment possession is lost is the actual subject.

Decision-making triggers:

- Possession is lost → the nearest player closes down instantly, regardless of position or role.
- The nearest player has engaged → the rest of the group recovers compact shape behind them.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Explosive first step and clean closing-down technique.
Tactical	Instant recognition of who is genuinely nearest, regardless of usual role.
Physical	Sharp, repeated bursts of acceleration.
Psychological	Urgency without panic — a controlled, instant reaction rather than a chaotic scramble.
Communication & leadership	The reacting player and the rest of the group communicating the recovery instantly.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made the nearest player's reaction fast or slow in a given repetition?
2. What happened to the picture when the reaction was late?
3. Why does "nearest" matter more than "usual defensive role" in this specific moment?
4. How does this connect to Week 4's transition-to-defence work — is this the same first-reaction principle, tested under the highest possible stakes?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the time allowed for the nearest player to react.
2. Add a genuine counter-attacking consequence if the reaction is too slow.
3. Increase the pressing team's numbers temporarily.

Regressions:

1. Extend the reaction-time window while the habit is being built.
2. Reduce the pressing team's numbers temporarily.
3. Allow the coach to call out who is nearest while the recognition skill is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
A player who isn't genuinely nearest reacts instead, out of habit or usual role	Old habits about "whose job it is" override the actual picture	The reacting player has to cover more ground than the truly nearest player would have	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify who was actually nearest	Resume
The reaction is fast but chaotic, with no recovery shape behind it	Urgency without organisation	The immediate reaction succeeds but the group behind it is disorganised	Stop	Short group intervention: "the reaction is only half the job — what's behind it?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since precise recognition of "nearest" and the reaction that follows is the entire teaching point.

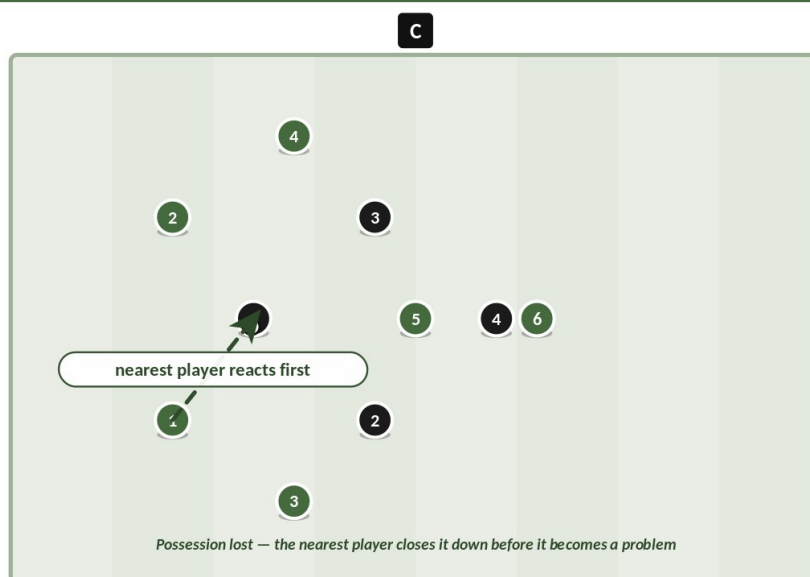
Success indicators:

- The genuinely nearest player reacts consistently, regardless of their usual role.
- The reaction happens within the two-second window with increasing frequency.
- The group recovers organised shape behind the immediate reaction.

Coach's eye: watch the half-second right after a turnover — a team whose nearest player is already moving before the ball has even settled has internalised this lesson.

T28.2 THE LAST BALL — Quick Regain, Protecting a Lead

40 x 26 m • 6v4 • nearest players react first to regain possession instantly and kill the danger • 15 minutes



● Team leading 1-0 ● Chasing team ○ Ball ➔ Nearest player closes instantly

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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. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1-6 and four players in black bibs numbered 1-4 spread across the area. White football near the centre of the area. A curved dashed line showing a green player reacting instantly to close down the ball. Title: 'THE LAST BALL — Quick Regain, Protecting a Lead'. Subtitle: '40 x 26 m • 6v4 • nearest players react first to regain possession instantly and kill the danger • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training area, a green-bibbed player reacting explosively to close down a loose ball the instant possession is lost, team-mates recovering organised shape behind them, black-bibbed pressers reacting to the quick response, coach centrally positioned observing the reaction time closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. A player in a dark green bib reacting explosively to close down a loose ball the instant possession is lost. Team-mates in dark green bibs recovering organised shape behind them. Players in black bibs reacting to the quick response. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the reaction time. 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 — FIVE TO GO (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Compresses every relevant Phase 5 principle into a single scripted small-sided game, framed explicitly as "1-0 up, five minutes left," requiring the team to apply secure retention, compactness, instant transitions, and restart control together rather than in isolation.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 7 possession players (leading team) vs 6 opposition
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 6
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers, 6 cones, a visible countdown timer
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** nearest sideline
- **Coach position:** sideline, central, framing the scenario continuously
- **Rotation method:** groups swap every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention and progression

Practice walkthrough: A genuinely scripted "1-0 up, five minutes left" scenario runs against a visible countdown, requiring the leading team to combine every relevant Phase 5 skill: secure retention (Week 24), compact defending (Week 21), instant transitions (Practice 2 above), and composed restart control (Week 27) — all inside one continuous, realistic picture rather than separated into individual drills.

Rules: Standard possession rules, framed entirely around the scripted scenario; the coach notes specific moments where each of the week's constituent skills is correctly or incorrectly applied.

Tactical roles: the full accumulated skill set from Weeks 24–27, now required simultaneously under a single, realistic picture.

Decision-making triggers: the full accumulated set from Weeks 24–27, expected to fire together rather than in isolation.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution quality across every relevant skill, under realistic combined pressure.
Tactical	Correctly identifying which specific skill a given moment calls for.
Physical	Sustained, high-intensity application matching a genuine final five minutes.
Psychological	Composure under a realistic, continuous pressure picture rather than an isolated drill.
Communication & leadership	The team organising itself continuously across every relevant skill.

Guided discovery questions:

1. Which specific Week 24–27 skill came up most clearly in this practice, and which came up least?
2. What was the hardest part of combining several skills together rather than practising them separately?
3. How does this connect to Week 23's minimal-instruction consolidation practice — is this the same "does it all fuse together" test, applied specifically to the game's final moments?
4. What is the team most confident about from this whole block, and what needs more work?

Progressions:

1. Extend the scripted period slightly, testing whether the combined discipline holds for longer.
2. Reduce the countdown's warning increments, sharpening the pressure of the closing seconds.
3. Add a genuine defensive transition consequence for any lapse.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the scripted period while the combined skill is being consolidated.
2. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
3. Allow the coach to name which specific skill is needed in the moment while the combination is being learned.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team applies one familiar skill (e.g. secure retention) while neglecting another that's equally needed (e.g. restart control)	Comfort with the most recently or most confidently trained skill overrides balanced application	One skill dominates while others are visibly absent	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what else from this block did that moment need?"	Resume
The combined pressure causes a breakdown in basic composure	Genuine cognitive and physical load of combining several skills at once	Panic, rushed decisions, or lost shape under the combined demand	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to the specific principle that broke down	Resume

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

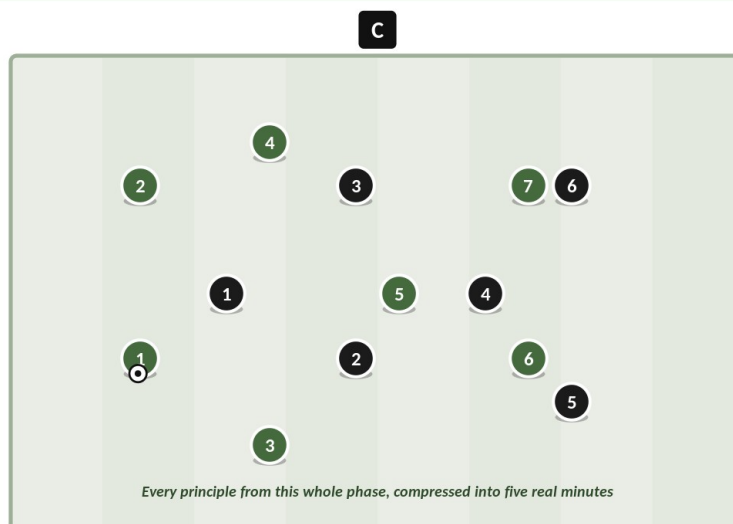
Success indicators:

- All four constituent skills (retention, compactness, transition, restart control) are visible across the practice.
- The team's composure holds under the combined, realistic pressure.
- Players can identify, after the practice, specific moments where a named skill was used correctly.

Coach's eye: this practice is a genuine rehearsal for the real thing — judge it by whether the team's composure and skill application would transfer directly to an actual final five minutes on Saturday.

T28.3 FIVE TO GO — Scripted Small-Sided Scenario

34 x 22 m • 7v6 • a scripted "1-0 up, five minutes left" picture — compact, composed, quick to react • 15 minutes



● Team leading 1-0 ● 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 and a visible countdown clock graphic in the corner. 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: 'FIVE TO GO — Scripted Small-Sided Scenario'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v6 • a scripted \"1-0 up, five minutes left\" picture — compact, composed, quick to react • 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 with a visible countdown clock or stopwatch prominently displayed, seven green-bibbed players retaining possession calmly under real pressure from six black-bibbed opponents, coach on the touchline animated and tracking the whole picture intensely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training with a visible stopwatch or countdown timer prominently displayed pitch-side. Seven players in dark green bibs retaining possession calmly under pressure from six players in black bibs. A coach on the touchline, animated and intensely focused, tracking the whole picture. 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 — PLAY IT OUT (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, scripting a genuinely realistic final five minutes leading 1-0, applying the whole of Phase 5's teaching under the most match-realistic pressure training can offer.

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 carries the full accumulated organisational responsibility from Weeks 24–27

- **Team sizes:** 8 v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 8 flat markers, corner cones, a

visible countdown timer

- **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: A genuinely scripted, realistic final five minutes, with the leading team applying every relevant Phase 5 skill under sustained match pressure from a team desperate for an equaliser — the single most complete test of this whole block of the season.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules, framed entirely around the scripted scenario.

Tactical roles: the full accumulated skill set from the entire Match Management phase, combined for the first time with a genuinely live, moving opponent at full match scale and intensity.

Decision-making triggers: the full accumulated set from Weeks 24–27, applied under match conditions with a moving, live opponent and a genuine, visible countdown.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution under full match pressure and fatigue, across every relevant skill.
Tactical	Genuine, sustained application of the whole phase's teaching, combined.
Physical	The week's peak physical demand — sustained, match-realistic intensity throughout.
Psychological	Composure under the most realistic pressure training can offer.
Communication & leadership	The leading team organising and confirming its approach out loud, continuously, across every relevant skill.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What is the single clearest piece of evidence tonight that this whole block's teaching has genuinely landed?
2. Where did the team come closest to losing composure, and what specifically caused it?

- How does tonight compare to how the team would have handled this exact scenario back in Week 23, before Phase 5 began?

Progressions:

- Extend the scripted period to test sustained application under greater fatigue.
- Introduce an unexpected complication (a notional red card, a notional injury stoppage) inside the scripted period.

Regressions:

- Reduce the chasing team's intensity while the combined skill is being consolidated.
- Reintroduce Practice 2 or Practice 3 briefly if a specific constituent skill has clearly broken down.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The leading team's composure holds early but fades as the genuine pressure of the countdown increases	Realistic fatigue and psychological pressure combining under the most demanding version of this week's test	Visible errors or lapses increase as the countdown approaches zero	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to the specific principle that broke down	Resume
One constituent skill (e.g. restart control) is visibly absent despite others being present	That specific skill hasn't fully transferred from its dedicated week	No examples of that skill across the full period	Note for the phase review rather than correcting live	—	Continue

Coach interventions used in this practice: minimal — this practice is primarily diagnostic and confirmatory, closely mirroring Week 23's approach to Phase 4's final consolidation practice.

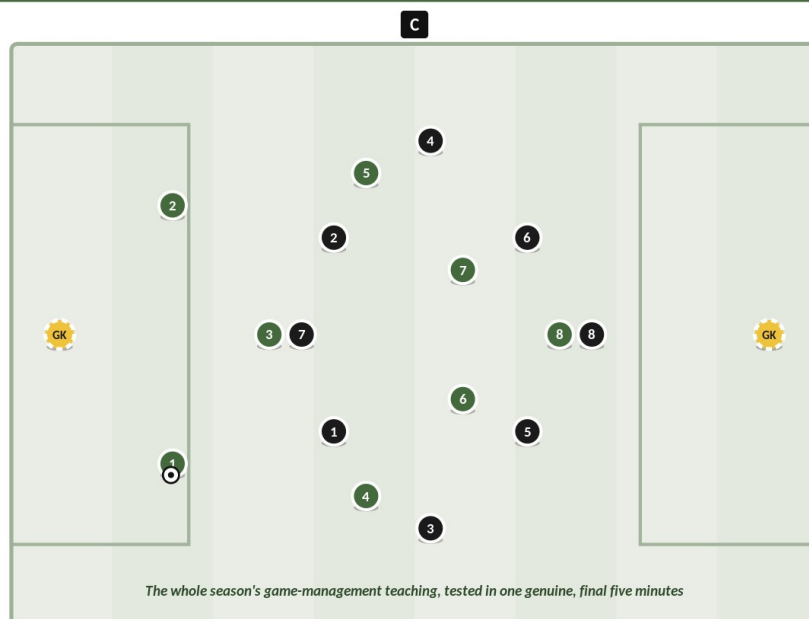
Success indicators:

- The leading team sees out the scripted period without conceding a clean chance.
- All four constituent skills from Weeks 24–27 are visible across the practice.
- The team's composure holds through the genuine pressure of the countdown's final moments.

Coach's eye: this practice is this week's — and arguably this whole phase's — clearest test of whether the accumulated teaching has transferred; record specific, named examples rather than general impressions while they're still fresh.

T28.4 PLAY IT OUT — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • a genuine, scripted final five minutes leading 1-0 — see it through • 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, and a visible countdown clock graphic in the corner. 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: 'PLAY IT OUT — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • a genuine, scripted final five minutes leading 1-0 — see it through • 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 with a visible countdown clock prominently displayed, green-bibbed players organised, composed, and defending with genuine intensity, black-bibbed opponents pressing desperately for an equaliser, coach on the touchline near halfway tracking the whole picture with visible tension.

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, with a visible countdown clock displayed pitch-side. Players in dark green bibs organised, composed, and defending with genuine intensity. Players in black bibs pressing desperately for an equaliser. A coach stands near the halfway line on the touchline, visibly focused and 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 leading with five minutes left on Saturday, what does the perfect version of that five minutes actually look like?"

Thursday — Session 56

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	56 of 72
Week	28
Season phase	5 — Match Management
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Final-five-minutes scenarios (losing)
Short summary	Compresses Weeks 24–27's game-management teaching into a realistic, scripted final five minutes while chasing an equaliser, emphasising the possession principles that make committed urgency actually productive — quality, patient combination and decisive box entries under genuine, extreme time pressure.
Tags	`game-management` `possession` `scripted-scenarios`
Primary learning objective	The team applies possession principles — quality combination, decisive final third play — with real urgency in a genuine final-five-minutes picture while chasing an equaliser.
Secondary learning objective	Every specific skill from Weeks 24–27 that applies to a losing scenario (finding urgency, breaking down a block, restart control) is available and used correctly together.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: composed game management late on.
Expected tactical outcome	The team creates and converts a genuine chance inside a scripted final five minutes chasing an equaliser.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high, match-specific — this week's practices are deliberately realistic in intensity, matching what a genuine final five minutes actually demands.
Recommended intensity	7.5–8.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; the chasing team's goalkeeper is coached specifically on committing forward for a genuine, late set-piece scenario if the situation allows.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 34 m (Practice 3).
Area layout	A tight, packed 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 a fuller 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Practice 2 works in any packed 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>Quick Hands, Real Urgency</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Every Second Counts</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>The Final Push</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Beat the Clock</i>	Black
0:59–1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — QUICK HANDS, REAL URGENCY (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Introduces a genuine sense of urgency before any tactical structure is added, sharpening decision speed under a real, ticking countdown.

Organisation: 20 x 16 m grid, small groups, with a visible countdown timer. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join fully.

Walkthrough: Rondo-style possession played against a visible countdown, with a target number of clean combinations to complete before time runs out, rehearsing the combination of speed and quality this week's teaching depends on.

Rules: Combinations must be genuinely clean (no misplaced passes) to count toward the target.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean, quick technique under genuine time pressure.
- *Psychological:* urgency that sharpens quality rather than degrading it.

PRACTICE 2 — EVERY SECOND COUNTS (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Isolates the specific combination technique needed in a packed, congested area under genuine, extreme time pressure — a direct extension of Week 22's and Week 25's low-block-breaking work, now compressed into the tightest possible window.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m, with a marked packed zone
- **Players:** 6 attackers (chasing team) vs 4 low-block defenders
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through, providing a recycling option outside the packed zone
- **Team sizes:** 6 v 4
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers marking the packed zone, a visible countdown timer
- **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 through the zone

Practice walkthrough: Six attackers work inside a packed central zone against four low-block defenders, this time against a visible countdown that removes any illusion of unlimited time — every touch and every decision has to count, echoing this week's theme directly. A late-arriving runner, timed off the combination rather than before it, provides the additional threat this specific picture rewards.

Rules: A clean pass that breaks the defensive line before the countdown expires scores a bonus point; the countdown resets after each repetition.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* precise, quick decision-making under genuine time pressure is the whole point of this practice.
- *Unit:* the whole group's spacing and timing must be sharper than in a more open, unpressured practice.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers:

- A clean combination is available → play it immediately, with no hesitation.
- No clean combination is available → recycle only briefly before trying again, since time genuinely is short.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Quick, accurate one- or two-touch passing under genuine time pressure.
Tactical	Recognising and timing combinations without the luxury of unlimited time to wait for the perfect picture.
Physical	Sharp, sudden movements at high intensity throughout.
Psychological	Urgency that sharpens decision-making rather than causing panic.
Communication & leadership	Clear, quick calls to organise combinations under real pressure.

Guided discovery questions:

1. How did the visible countdown change the quality of decision-making compared to an unpressured version of this practice?
2. What made the late-arriving runner's timing succeed or fail under genuine time pressure?
3. How does this connect to Week 25's overload work — is this the same skill, compressed into a genuinely shorter window?
4. What is the risk of rushing so much that quality actually drops, even under real time pressure?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the countdown further, sharpening the demand.
2. Add a fifth low-block defender, testing whether quality holds under both time and numerical pressure.
3. Add a condition requiring the combination to end in a shot before time expires.

Regressions:

1. Extend the countdown while the combined speed-and-quality skill is being built.
2. Widen the packed zone for more space.
3. Reduce the low-block defenders to three.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The genuine time pressure causes a visible drop in technical quality	Urgency tipping into panic rather than sharpened focus	Passes are rushed and inaccurate, missing team-mates who were genuinely available	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: reset and clarify that urgency should sharpen quality, not replace it	Resume
Players stop attempting combinations altogether as the countdown nears zero, freezing under pressure	Anxiety about the visible, ticking clock	Hesitation or safe, non-progressive passes as time runs out	Stop	Short group intervention: "the clock is a reason to be sharper, not more scared"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct*, since maintaining quality under genuine time pressure is the entire teaching point.

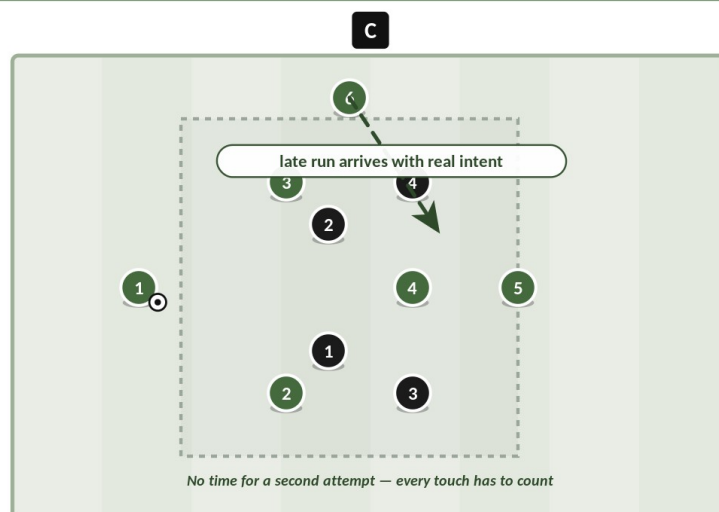
Success indicators:

- Clean combinations that break the defensive line increase even as the countdown is reduced.
- The late-arriving runner's timing improves under genuine time pressure.
- Players maintain composure and quality rather than descending into panic as time runs low.

Coach's eye: watch for sharpened focus, not just increased speed — a team that plays faster and better under the countdown has understood the lesson; a team that simply plays faster and worse has not.

H28.2 EVERY SECOND COUNTS — Quality Under Real Time Pressure

34 x 22 m · 6v4 in a packed zone · fast, high-quality combinations with genuinely no time left to waste · 15 minutes



● Team chasing an equaliser ● Leading team ○ Ball ➔ Late arrival into the box

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · Week 28 · 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, a dashed packed central zone, and a visible countdown clock graphic in the corner. Six players in dark green bibs numbered 1–6 combining against four players in black bibs numbered 1–4 defending compactly. White football near a green player. A curved dashed line showing a late-arriving runner. Title: 'EVERY SECOND COUNTS — Quality Under Real Time Pressure'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 6v4 in a packed zone · fast, high-quality combinations with genuinely no time left to waste · 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a tight, congested training zone with a visible countdown clock displayed nearby, green-bibbed attackers combining with sharp, decisive touches against compact black-bibbed defenders, coach centrally positioned observing the speed and quality of decision-making closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training in a tight, congested area, with a visible countdown clock or stopwatch displayed nearby. Players in dark green bibs combining with sharp, decisive touches against compact players in black bibs. A coach standing centrally, closely observing the speed and quality of 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 — THE FINAL PUSH (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the individual quality-under-pressure work into a full team practice, scripting a genuine final five minutes chasing an equaliser and requiring the whole team to commit numbers forward with a clear plan, echoing Week 25's "All In" practice but compressed into a genuinely realistic, timed window.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 attacking outfield + goalkeeper vs 8 low-block defenders
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the attacking team's goalkeeper supports the committed structure and is coached on the genuine option of joining a late set piece if the scripted scenario allows

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

discipline zone, a visible countdown timer

- **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 find a genuine equaliser before

the countdown expires; the defending team holds a compact, organised low block and looks to break on a turnover

Practice walkthrough: A genuinely scripted, timed final five minutes chasing an equaliser, with the attacking team committing real numbers forward — more even than Week 25's practice — while a clearly named, minimal group holds rest-defence responsibility. The whole exercise is framed explicitly around the countdown, giving the practice the emotional and tactical weight of an actual match situation.

Rules: Standard positional practice rules; a genuine goal scored before the countdown expires is the practice's actual objective, framed exactly as it would be on Saturday.

Tactical roles: the full accumulated skill set from Weeks 20, 22, and 25, combined under this week's genuine time pressure.

Decision-making triggers: the full accumulated set, applied under a genuine, visible countdown rather than an open-ended practice.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Clean combination and finishing technique under full match pressure and genuine time constraint.
Tactical	Committing numbers forward with a clear, understood plan rather than chaos.
Physical	The week's peak physical demand — sustained, urgent, high-intensity play throughout.
Psychological	Composure and belief under the most realistic time pressure training can offer.
Communication & leadership	The team organising and confirming who is committed forward and who holds rest defence, continuously, against the genuine countdown.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What was the clearest example of the team correctly committing forward with a plan tonight, rather than just committing forward?
2. How did the genuine, visible countdown change the team's decision-making compared to an open-ended practice?
3. How does this connect to Week 25's "All In" practice — what's different about doing this under a real, ticking clock?
4. What did the low block have to solve once the team had genuinely, urgently committed forward?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the countdown further, sharpening the pressure of the closing seconds.
2. Add a genuine late set-piece opportunity inside the scripted period.
3. Increase the low block's defensive discipline, testing whether the team's urgency stays productive rather than chaotic.

Regressions:

1. Extend the countdown while the combined skill is being consolidated.
2. Reduce the low block's numbers temporarily, simplifying the picture.
3. Reintroduce Week 25's untimed "All In" format briefly if the genuine time pressure has caused the plan to collapse into chaos.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The genuine countdown causes the team's commitment to become chaotic rather than planned	Real time pressure overwhelming the disciplined structure built in Week 25	No player is clearly holding rest defence; numbers are simply thrown forward	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to Week 25's principle, now under real pressure	Resume
The team hesitates too long, wasting valuable time deciding whether to commit	Uncertainty or overcaution under the pressure of a genuine, visible countdown	Time expires with the team still in a settled, uncommitted shape	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did we commit in time, or did the clock beat us to the decision?"	Resume

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

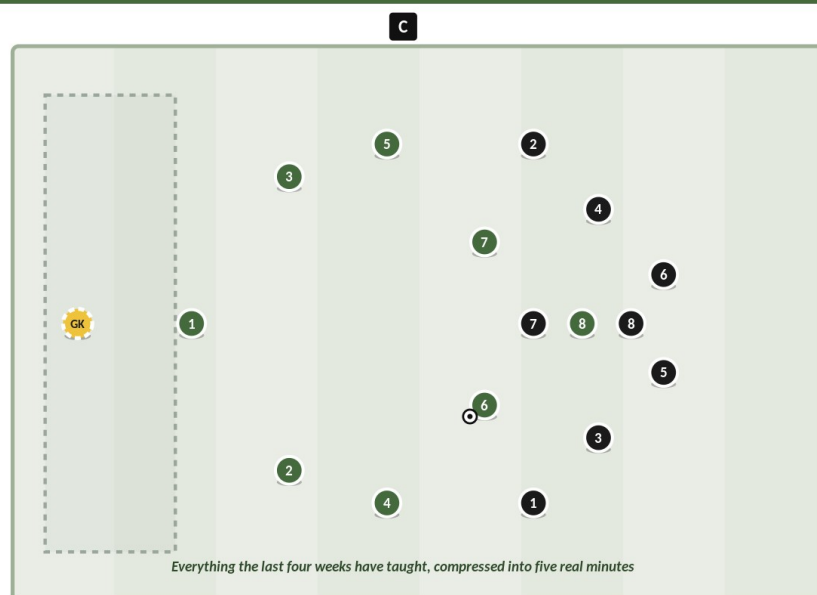
Success indicators:

- The team commits genuine numbers forward with a clearly named rest-defence group, even under real time pressure.
- A genuine goal or clear chance is created before the countdown expires.
- The team's decision-making speed to commit forward improves across repetitions.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of whether Week 25's teaching survives genuine time pressure — judge it specifically against whether the commitment stays planned and disciplined, not just urgent.

H28.3 THE FINAL PUSH — Committing Everything, With a Plan

50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • genuine, scripted final five minutes chasing an equaliser — committed, not chaotic • 15 minutes



● Team chasing an equaliser ● Leading team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ■ Named rest-defence player only

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 28 • Diagrams not to scale

AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 50x34 metre area with dimension labels, a dashed rest-defence risk zone marked near the attacking team's own goal, and a visible countdown clock graphic in the corner. A goalkeeper in yellow on the left. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 heavily committed forward, with only one green player remaining inside the marked risk zone, and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 organised in a compact low-block shape. White football near a green player. Title: 'THE FINAL PUSH — Committing Everything, With a Plan'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • genuine, scripted final five minutes chasing an equaliser — committed, not chaotic • 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 with a visible countdown clock displayed nearby, a heavily committed green-bibbed attacking team pressing forward with genuine urgency against a compact black-bibbed low block, one lone green-bibbed defender visible holding position near their own goal, coach observing intently 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, with a visible countdown clock displayed pitch-side. A heavily committed group of players in dark green bibs pressing forward with genuine urgency against a compact defensive block of players in black bibs. One lone player in a dark green bib visible holding a defensive position near their own goal. A coach observing intently 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 — BEAT THE CLOCK (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game framed entirely around a genuine countdown, rewarding a goal scored before time expires, 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

- **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 chasing 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 trailing 0-1 against a visible countdown clock; that team wins outright if it scores before the countdown reaches zero, directly rewarding this week's central skill.

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

Tactical roles: the full quality-under-pressure and committed-structure 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, quick combination and finishing technique under game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly balancing urgency and quality 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 urgency under real time pressure.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best "beat the clock" moment work?
2. What's one thing from this week — the final five minutes leading or chasing — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does staying calm under a countdown matter just as much as the raw effort to chase it?

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 chasing team panics as the countdown nears zero, abandoning quality for desperation	Pressure of the visible countdown overwhelming composure	Rushed, low-quality attempts increase sharply in the final moments	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "did that need to be rushed, or was there a better option?"	Resume
The chasing team gives up mentally once the countdown gets low, stopping genuine effort	Discouragement under visible, mounting time pressure	Reduced work-rate and belief as the countdown approaches zero	Stop	Short group intervention: "the clock isn't the opponent — keep playing until it hits zero"	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.

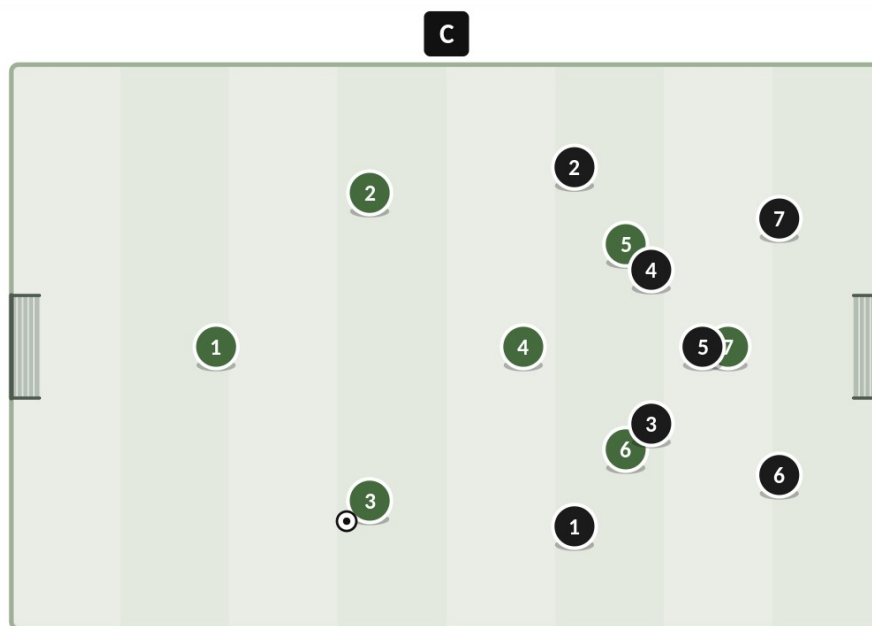
Success indicators:

- The chasing team creates and sometimes converts genuine chances before the countdown expires.
- Composure and quality are maintained even as the countdown gets low.
- Players finish the session animated and positive, regardless of the specific outcome.

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.

H28.4 BEAT THE CLOCK — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • a genuine countdown — score before it hits zero and level the game • 17 minutes



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

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 28 • Diagrams not to scale

AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x22 metre pitch with a full-size goal at each end and a visible countdown clock graphic in the corner. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and seven players in black bibs numbered 1–7 compressed toward one side of the pitch near a goal. White football near a green player. Title: 'BEAT THE CLOCK — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v7 • a genuine countdown — score before it hits zero and level the game • 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 with a visible countdown clock nearing zero, a green-bibbed player striking a determined shot on goal, black-bibbed defenders scrambling to block it, both full-size goals visible, coach on the touchline animated 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 and a visible countdown clock nearing zero, displayed pitch-side. A player in a dark green bib striking a determined shot on goal. Players in black bibs scrambling to block it. Warm early-evening light, realistic grass pitch and long shadows, amateur adult players of varied build showing visible energy and determination. A coach on the touchline, animated and encouraging. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

REFLECTION (1 MINUTE)

One question to the group: "If we're chasing an equaliser with five minutes left on Saturday, what's the one thing we promise ourselves we won't stop doing?"

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Apply the correct match-management skill — from the whole of Weeks 24–27 — the instant the final five minutes begin, whichever direction the scoreline runs.
2. If leading, prioritise instant transitions and composed restart control over raw effort alone.
3. If chasing, commit genuine numbers forward with a clear, named rest-defence plan, maintaining quality under real urgency.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** organise the accumulated Weeks 24–27 skill set out loud, continuously, in the final five minutes.
2. **Midfield unit:** provide the instant transition reactions when leading, and the patient, quality combinations when chasing.
3. **Front players:** support secure retention when leading, and combine directly and decisively when chasing.

Individual role reminders:

- The final five minutes aren't a new set of skills — they're everything from this whole block, applied together, under real pressure.
- If we're leading, the nearest player reacts first, every single time, without exception.
- If we're chasing, commit with a plan, not with panic — know who's holding rest defence.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Whether the team saw out or found a goal in the final five minutes of the most recent fixture.
- Number of instant regains achieved in the final five minutes while leading.
- Number of genuine chances created in the final five minutes while chasing.
- Composure of communication and organisation throughout the final five minutes, regardless of the scoreline.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

Final-five-minutes scenarios, winning and losing

STRUCTURE	HOW THE WINNING SCENARIO IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	HOW THE LOSING SCENARIO IS TYPICALLY ORGANISED	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	KEY RISK
4-3-3	The double pivot and back four prioritise instant transitions and secure retention, with wide forwards tracking back further	Both full-backs commit forward, with a genuine attacking overload created around the box	The whole-phase, accumulated principle applied together under real time pressure	The whole team losing organisation simultaneously under the genuine pressure of a visible countdown
3-4-3	The back three and a holding midfielder prioritise compactness and instant transitions, with wing-backs sitting deeper	Both wing-backs push forward, with the back three and one holding midfielder managing the rest-defence trade-off	The whole-phase, accumulated principle applied together under real time pressure	The back three being caught fully exposed if both wing-backs commit forward without a clear, communicated plan

Coach Review

To be completed by the coaching staff after delivery — this review, together with Week 23's, should feed directly into the Phase 5 Review document covering Weeks 24–29.

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.