



Week 30 — Performance Consolidation

Tags: `team-identity` `possession` `defending` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	30 of 36
Season phase	6 — Performance Consolidation
Core principle	All possession principles
Secondary principle	All non-possession principles
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Phase 6 is the season's final block, and its purpose is different from everything that came before it: not teaching new content, but refining what the team already does into a genuinely recognisable identity. Tuesday asks what the team's possession identity actually is — which combination of the season's principles the team leans on most naturally — and sharpens it rather than adding to it. Thursday does the same for the team's defensive identity. Neither day introduces anything new; both are about recognising and polishing real strengths that already exist.
Formation-neutral explanation	A team's "identity" is not its formation — it's the recognisable pattern of decisions it tends to make, in possession and out of it, regardless of which formation or which opponent it's facing. Two teams playing the same formation can have completely different identities; the same team can keep its identity recognisable across several different formations, which is exactly what this whole season has been building toward.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 team whose identity leans toward patient central possession will look recognisably similar even if it occasionally shifts to a back three, because the underlying decision-making pattern — how it uses width, when it switches, how it presses — travels with the team rather than the shirt numbers. A 3-4-3 team whose identity leans toward direct, vertical progression will look recognisably similar even against a low block or a high press, because that identity is a pattern of choices, not a fixed shape.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, use this week to name, explicitly, what the team's real identity actually is — a good run of form is the best possible evidence base for this conversation, so don't let it pass without capturing it in specific, nameable terms.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team's approach has looked inconsistent or unclear from match to match, this week answers it directly — the practices below are specifically designed to surface and sharpen a clearer identity.

Route C — Attendance, facilities or player availability are disrupted. Both themes scale to reduced numbers — the underlying recognition-and-refinement process matters more than rehearsing every practice at full numbers every week.

Tuesday — Session 59

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	59 of 72
Week	30
Season phase	6 — Performance Consolidation
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Refining identity: possession principles
Short summary	Identifies and sharpens the specific combination of possession principles the team leans on most naturally — support angles, progression choices, switching, overloads — rather than teaching new content, then tests whether that identity holds recognisably against a deliberately varied opponent picture.
Tags	`team-identity` `possession` `refinement`
Primary learning objective	The team can name its own possession identity in specific, concrete terms, and execute it with sharper quality than before.
Secondary learning objective	The team's possession identity holds recognisably regardless of the specific picture an opponent presents.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: recognisable style regardless of opponent.
Expected tactical outcome	A visibly sharper, more consistent version of the team's existing possession patterns, not a new pattern.
Expected physical load	Moderate, maintenance — Phase 6 is deliberately not a peak-load block.
Recommended intensity	6.5–7.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; the goalkeeper's specific contribution to the team's possession identity is named explicitly this week.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A moderate technical zone for Practice 2, narrowing for Practice 3, returning to full size for Practice 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 reduces to 6v4; Practice 3 becomes 6v5; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	All three practices scale proportionally; the identity-refinement principle survives at any scale.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Show Me Our Way</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Our Possession DNA</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Play Like Us</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Conditioned match — <i>Same Team, Any Opponent</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — SHOW ME OUR WAY (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Surfaces the team's natural possession tendencies before any tactical structure is added, giving the coach an early read on what to sharpen this session.

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

Walkthrough: An unconditioned rondo with no specific instruction beyond "keep the ball well" — the coach observes closely which patterns emerge naturally (quick one-touch combinations, patient circulation, direct vertical passes) without prescribing any of them.

Rules: None beyond standard possession-retention play.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* whatever the group's natural technical tendencies reveal themselves to be.
- *Psychological:* playing naturally, without trying to perform a specific style.

PRACTICE 2 — OUR POSSESSION DNA (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Combines every possession principle the team has been taught across the season — support angles, progression through/around/over, switching, overloads — into one fluid, continuous picture, allowing the coach to observe and sharpen the specific combination the team already leans on, rather than teaching anything new.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 44 x 28 m
- **Players:** 8 possession players vs 5 pressers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as part of the possession

group

- **Team sizes:** 8 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:** mobile, observing the whole picture closely
- **Rotation method:** groups rotate every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** possession retention and progression

Practice walkthrough: Eight possession players face five pressers in an open, unconditioned picture, free to use any combination of the season's possession principles. The coach observes which specific combinations the team reaches for naturally and repeatedly — this is the team's real identity — and gives targeted technical correction to sharpen exactly those patterns, rather than introducing new ones.

Rules: Standard possession-retention rules, with no artificial conditions imposed.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* whichever combination of skills a given player naturally offers most often.
- *Unit:* the group's collective tendencies, observed and then sharpened.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is possession-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers: the full accumulated set from the whole season, observed for which specific patterns recur most naturally.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Sharpened execution of whichever patterns the team naturally favours.
Tactical	Recognising the team's own real tendencies rather than an idealised or imposed style.
Physical	Moderate, sustained possession-based movement.
Psychological	Confidence in playing the team's own natural game, rather than an unfamiliar imposed one.
Communication & leadership	Players naming and reinforcing the patterns they see recurring.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did you notice the team doing again and again in this practice, without being told to?
2. Which of the season's principles do we seem to lean on most naturally — and which do we use least, even though we know them?
3. Why might sharpening what we already do well matter more, this late in the season, than adding something new?
4. If an opponent studied us for this practice alone, what would they say our identity is?

Progressions:

1. Add a sixth presser, testing whether the identified identity holds under greater pressure.
2. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the technical demand on the identified patterns.
3. Add a genuine progression target once the identity has been named.

Regressions:

1. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
2. Reduce the pressing team to three players.
3. Allow the coach to name a specific principle to focus on if the group's natural tendencies aren't yet clear.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team's play looks inconsistent, with no clear recurring pattern	The team hasn't yet settled into a confident, natural identity	Different, seemingly random approaches from one sequence to the next	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what did we just do well there — can we do more of that?"	Resume
The team reverts to an imposed or "textbook" style rather than its own natural tendencies	Overthinking, trying to play a version of football rather than the team's own game	Play looks stilted or uncertain despite technical competence	Stop	Short group intervention: "play your way, not someone else's"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *questioning*, since recognising the team's own identity — rather than installing a new one — is the entire teaching point.

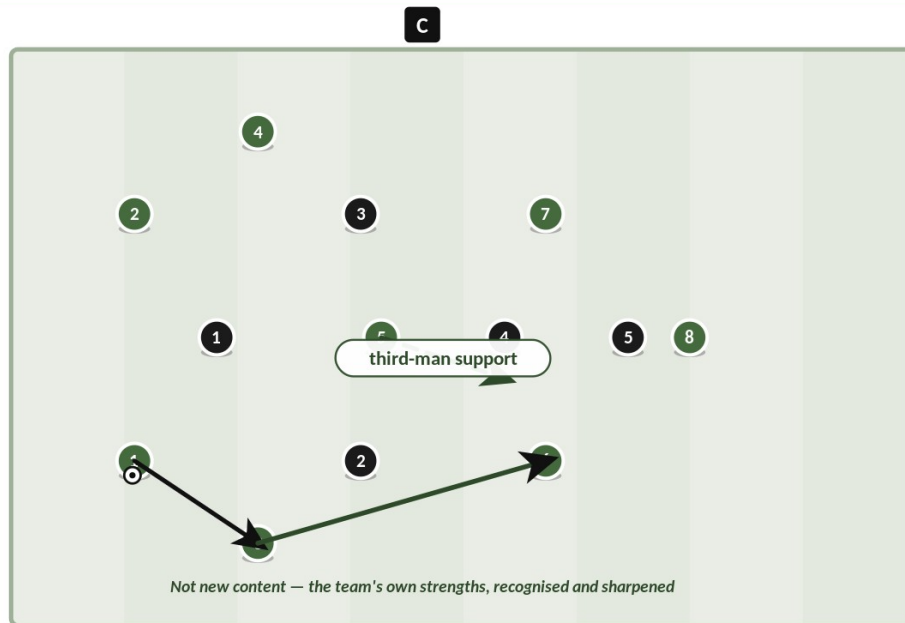
Success indicators:

- A specific, nameable combination of principles recurs consistently across the practice.
- Players can articulate what that combination is, in their own words.
- The quality of execution within that identified pattern improves as the practice progresses.

Coach's eye: resist the temptation to impose your own idea of what the team's identity "should" be — watch for what actually, repeatedly happens, and sharpen that.

T30.2 OUR POSSESSION DNA — Identity, Sharpened

44 x 28 m • 8v5 • every possession principle the team owns, combined in one fluid picture • 15 minutes



● Possession team ● Opposition ⊙ Ball ➡ Combination pass ➡ Switch of play
➡ Support run / third-man

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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 44x28 metre area with dimension labels. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 and five players in black bibs numbered 1–5 spread across the area. White football near a green player. Black solid arrows showing a combination pass, a bold diagonal arrow showing a switch of play, and a curved dashed line showing a third-man support run. Title: 'OUR POSSESSION DNA — Identity, Sharpened'. Subtitle: '44 x 28 m • 8v5 • every possession principle the team owns, combined in one fluid picture • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated wide view of a training area, eight green-bibbed players moving the ball fluidly through several combinations and a switch of play against five black-bibbed pressers, coach mobile and closely observing which patterns recur, notebook in hand.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated wide three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Players in dark green bibs moving the ball fluidly through several passing combinations and a long switch of play against players in black bibs pressing. A coach moving around the pitch, closely observing the play with a notebook in hand. 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 — PLAY LIKE US (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Moves the identified possession identity into a genuine, competitive game, specifically rewarding goals or clean progressions that come through the team's own named strengths rather than any goal by any means.

Organisation:

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

Practice walkthrough: Building directly on Practice 2's identified identity, a clean goal or progression built specifically through the team's own named patterns (for example, a switch of play, or a third-man combination, whichever the group identified as its own real strength) is worth double, sharpening the connection between "what we're good at" and "how we actually score."

Rules: Standard game rules; the bonus condition is defined specifically by whatever identity was named in Practice 2, not a generic one.

Tactical roles: the full identified identity from Practice 2, now applied under competitive, game-realistic pressure.

Decision-making triggers:

- The identified pattern is genuinely available → use it decisively.
- The identified pattern isn't available → play naturally rather than forcing it artificially.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Sharpened execution of the identified pattern under genuine competitive pressure.
Tactical	Recognising when the identified pattern is genuinely on, rather than forcing it.
Physical	Game-realistic possession-based intensity.
Psychological	Confidence and ownership of the team's own identified strengths.
Communication & leadership	Players calling out and celebrating moments the identified identity is used well.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did tonight's best example of "playing like us" actually look like?
2. Did the team ever force the identified pattern when it wasn't genuinely available — what happened?
3. How does knowing our own identity change our confidence compared to earlier in the season?
4. If we lost the ball trying to force the identified pattern, was that a fair trade, or should we have played more simply?

Progressions:

1. Increase the bonus value for the identified pattern.
2. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the pressure on the decision.
3. Add a second identified pattern from Practice 2's observations if more than one emerged clearly.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the bonus condition to a simpler, more achievable version of the identified pattern.
2. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
3. Allow any goal to count while the identity is still being confirmed.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team forces the identified pattern even when a simpler option is clearly better	The bonus condition is chased mechanically rather than played naturally	The identified pattern is attempted into a well-covered picture, losing possession	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that pattern really on, or were we chasing the bonus?"	Resume
The team avoids the identified pattern altogether, playing it safe	Uncertainty about whether the identity has genuinely been internalised yet	The identified pattern is never attempted even when clearly available	Stop	Short group intervention: "trust what we said we're good at"	Resume

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

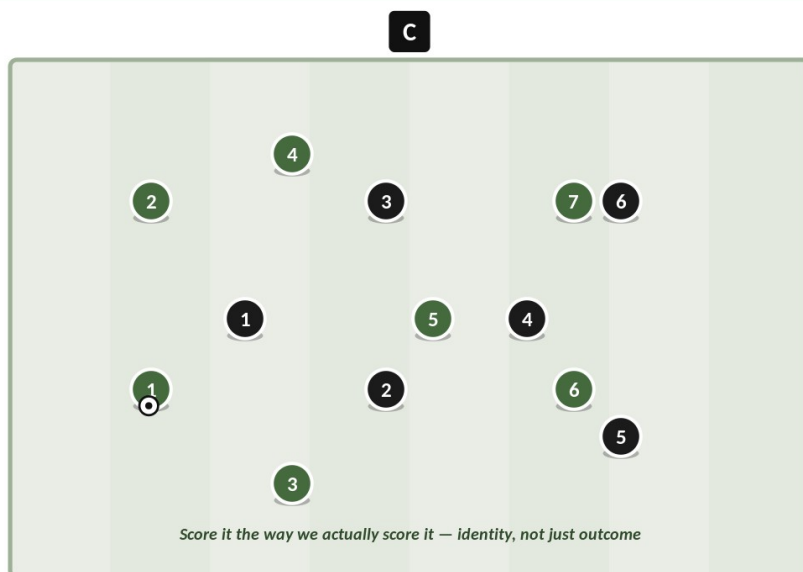
Success indicators:

- Goals or clean progressions through the identified pattern increase across the practice.
- The team distinguishes genuine opportunities to use the pattern from forced ones.
- Players celebrate and reinforce good examples of the identified identity themselves.

Coach's eye: watch for genuine recognition, not mechanical pattern-chasing — a team that uses its identity because the picture calls for it has understood the lesson; a team chasing the bonus regardless of the picture has not.

T30.3 PLAY LIKE US — Small-Sided Game

34 x 22 m • 7v6 • a goal built through the team's own identified strengths is worth double • 15 minutes



● Possession team ● Opposition ⊙ Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x22 metre area with dimension labels. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread across the area. White football near a green player. Title: 'PLAY LIKE US — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v6 • a goal built through the team's own identified strengths is worth double • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a training area, seven green-bibbed players combining in a clearly recognisable, practised pattern against six black-bibbed opponents, coach on the touchline nodding approvingly, tracking the identity closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Seven players in dark green bibs combining in a clearly practised, confident pattern of play against six players in black bibs. A coach on the touchline, nodding approvingly, closely tracking the team's style of play. 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 — SAME TEAM, ANY OPPONENT (CONDITIONED MATCH)

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

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, deliberately varying the opposition's approach mid-match — pressing high for one period, sitting deep for another — to test whether the team's possession identity stays recognisably consistent regardless of the picture presented.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the possession team's goalkeeper is coached as part of the team's identified identity

- **Team sizes:** 8 v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 8 flat markers, corner cones
- **Starting positions:** standard match shape
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** match-realistic restarts
- **Coach position:** touchline, halfway line, mobile
- **Rotation method:** teams swap the identity-testing role at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** standard, both teams attack opposite goals

Practice walkthrough: One team is instructed to deliberately change its defensive approach partway through — pressing high for the first half of the practice, then sitting in a deep block for the second — while the other team is coached simply to keep playing its own identified identity throughout, testing whether that identity remains genuinely recognisable against two very different pictures.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules.

Tactical roles: the full identified identity from Practices 2–3, combined for the first time with a genuinely varied, live opponent.

Decision-making triggers: the full accumulated set from the whole season, applied consistently regardless of the opponent's varying approach.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution quality of the identified identity under two distinct opposition pictures.
Tactical	Consistency of approach despite the varying opponent picture.
Physical	Moderate, sustained match-realistic intensity.
Psychological	Confidence in the team's own identity, regardless of what the opponent presents.
Communication & leadership	The team recognising and confirming that its own approach is holding steady.

Guided discovery questions:

1. Did the team's identity look recognisably the same against both the high press and the deep block?
2. What specifically had to adapt (Week 22's through/around/over choice, for example) while the underlying identity stayed the same?

3. How does this connect to Phase 4's structural-adaptability work — is a settled identity actually what makes tactical adaptability possible, rather than the opposite?
4. What would an opponent scouting this practice conclude about who we are as a team?

Progressions:

1. Add a third distinct opposition approach (e.g. a mid-block) inside the same practice.
2. Reduce the warning given before the opposition's approach changes.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

1. Extend the time given for each distinct opposition approach.
2. Reduce to 6v6 on a smaller area.
3. Reintroduce Practice 2's more open format briefly if the identity has broken down under the varied pressure.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team's approach looks completely different against the two opposition pictures, rather than recognisably the same underlying identity	The team hasn't yet internalised its identity deeply enough to apply it flexibly	Genuinely inconsistent decision-making, not just tactical adjustment, between the two periods	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The team becomes so fixed on "our identity" that it fails to make any sensible tactical adjustment at all	Overcorrection — confusing identity with rigidity	The team ignores an obviously better option because it doesn't match the identified pattern	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "is our identity a straitjacket, or does it flex with the picture?"	Resume

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

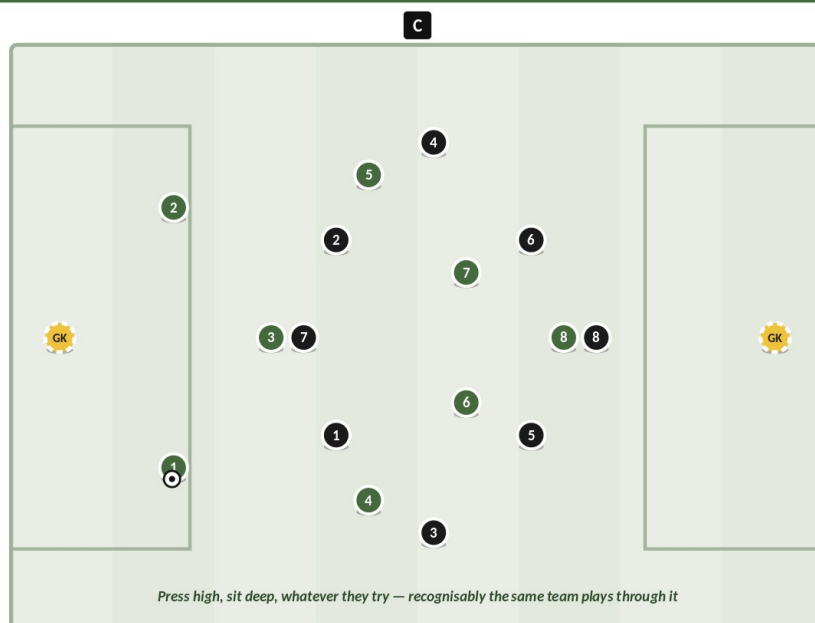
Success indicators:

- The team's underlying identity is recognisable across both distinct opposition pictures.
- Tactical adjustments (which specific principle is used) happen within a consistent overall approach.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, what stayed the same and what adapted.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of whether Tuesday's teaching has transferred — judge it specifically against whether an outside observer would say "that's clearly the same team" across both halves of the practice.

T30.4 SAME TEAM, ANY OPPONENT — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) · 8v8 + GKs · the opposition's approach changes mid-match — our identity doesn't · 15 minutes



● Team in possession ● Opposition ● Goalkeeper ● Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing half of a football pitch, 50x36 metres, with penalty box markings at both ends and a full-size goal at each end with a goalkeeper in yellow at each. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. Title: 'SAME TEAM, ANY OPPONENT — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) · 8v8 + GKs · the opposition's approach changes mid-match — our identity doesn't · 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Wide elevated view of a full-scale 8v8 conditioned match, green-bibbed players maintaining a clearly consistent style of play, black-bibbed opponents visibly transitioning between two different defensive approaches, coach on the touchline near halfway tracking the whole picture.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Wide elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 8v8 conditioned football match on a half-size grass pitch with full-size goals and goalkeepers in yellow at each end. Players in dark green bibs maintaining a clearly consistent, confident style of play. Players in black bibs visibly organised in a different defensive approach than earlier in the practice. 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: "In one sentence, what is our team's possession identity?"

Thursday — Session 60

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	60 of 72
Week	30
Season phase	6 — Performance Consolidation
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Refining identity: defensive principles
Short summary	Identifies and sharpens the specific combination of defensive principles the team leans on most naturally — pressure, cover, balance, compactness, collective triggers — rather than teaching new content, then tests whether that identity holds recognisably against a deliberately varied opposition attacking approach.
Tags	`team-identity` `defending` `refinement`
Primary learning objective	The team can name its own defensive identity in specific, concrete terms, and execute it with sharper quality than before.
Secondary learning objective	The team's defensive identity holds recognisably regardless of the specific attacking picture an opponent presents.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: recognisable style regardless of opponent.
Expected tactical outcome	A visibly sharper, more consistent version of the team's existing defensive patterns, not a new pattern.
Expected physical load	Moderate, maintenance — Phase 6 is deliberately not a peak-load block.
Recommended intensity	6.5–7.5 / 10.
Equipment list	20 footballs · 20 flat markers · 12 cones (orange) · 2 sets of bibs (2 colours, 10 each) · 2 full-size or portable goals
Player numbers	Designed for 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers; scales 10–22, see contingencies.
Goalkeeper requirements	Both goalkeepers train throughout; the goalkeeper's specific contribution to the team's defensive identity is named explicitly this week.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 34 m (Practice 3).
Area layout	A moderate technical zone for Practice 2, widening through Practices 3 and 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 3 reduces to a 6-player defending group vs 6 building.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 3 can extend to a fuller 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	Practice 2 works in any 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>Read and Show</i>	Light green

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Our Defensive DNA</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Unit / tactical practice — <i>Hold the Identity</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-0:59	15 min	Confidence game — <i>Know Who We Are</i>	Black
0:59-1:00	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — READ AND SHOW (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Surfaces the team's natural defensive tendencies before any tactical structure is added, giving the coach an early read on what to sharpen this session.

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

Walkthrough: Unconditioned defending in small groups with no specific instruction beyond "defend well" — the coach observes closely which patterns emerge naturally (aggressive pressing, patient jockeying, collective shifting) without prescribing any of them.

Rules: None beyond standard defensive play.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* whatever the group's natural technical tendencies reveal themselves to be.
- *Psychological:* defending naturally, without trying to perform a specific style.

PRACTICE 2 — OUR DEFENSIVE DNA (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Combines every defensive principle the team has been taught across the season — pressure, cover, balance, compactness, collective pressing triggers — into one fluid, continuous picture, allowing the coach to observe and sharpen the specific combination the team already leans on, rather than teaching anything new.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 44 x 28 m
- **Players:** 8 defending players vs 5 building players
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through as part of the defending

group

- **Team sizes:** 8 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:** mobile, observing the whole picture closely
- **Rotation method:** groups rotate every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** the defending group works to press and regain

Practice walkthrough: Eight defenders face five building players in an open, unconditioned picture, free to use any combination of the season's defensive principles. The coach observes which specific combinations the team reaches for naturally and repeatedly — this is the team's real defensive identity — and gives targeted technical correction to sharpen exactly those patterns, rather than introducing new ones.

Rules: Standard pressing-and-regaining rules, with no artificial conditions imposed.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* whichever combination of defensive skills a given player naturally offers most often.
- *Unit:* the group's collective tendencies, observed and then sharpened.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* not applicable — this practice is defence-focused throughout.

Decision-making triggers: the full accumulated set from the whole season, observed for which specific patterns recur most naturally.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Sharpened execution of whichever defensive patterns the team naturally favours.
Tactical	Recognising the team's own real tendencies rather than an idealised or imposed style.
Physical	Moderate, sustained defensive movement.
Psychological	Confidence in the team's own natural defensive game.
Communication & leadership	Players naming and reinforcing the defensive patterns they see recurring.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What did you notice the team doing again and again defensively, without being told to?
2. Which of the season's defensive principles do we seem to lean on most naturally — and which do we use least, even though we know them?
3. Why might sharpening what we already do well matter more, this late in the season, than adding something new?
4. If an opponent studied us for this practice alone, what would they say our defensive identity is?

Progressions:

1. Add a sixth building player, testing whether the identified identity holds under greater pressure.
2. Reduce the practice area, sharpening the technical demand on the identified patterns.
3. Add a genuine attacking-direction consequence for the defending team on a regain.

Regressions:

1. Widen the practice area for more time and space.
2. Reduce the building team to four players.
3. Allow the coach to name a specific principle to focus on if the group's natural tendencies aren't yet clear.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team's defending looks inconsistent, with no clear recurring pattern	The team hasn't yet settled into a confident, natural defensive identity	Different, seemingly random approaches from one sequence to the next	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what did we just do well there — can we do more of that?"	Resume
The team reverts to an imposed or "textbook" defensive style rather than its own natural tendencies	Overthinking, trying to defend a version of football rather than the team's own game	Play looks stilted or uncertain despite technical competence	Stop	Short group intervention: "defend your way, not someone else's"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *questioning*, since recognising the team's own defensive identity is the entire teaching point.

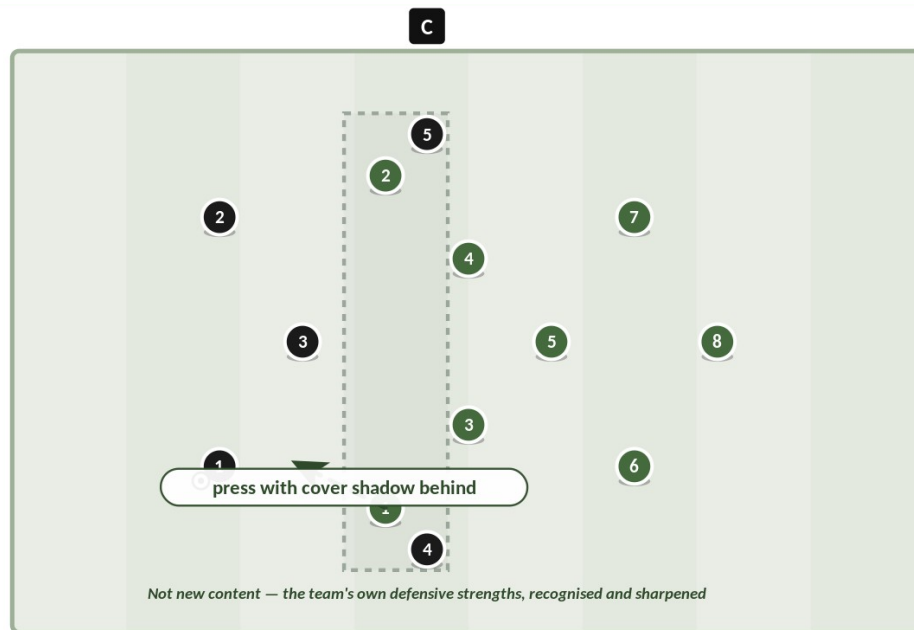
Success indicators:

- A specific, nameable combination of defensive principles recurs consistently across the practice.
- Players can articulate what that combination is, in their own words.
- The quality of execution within that identified pattern improves as the practice progresses.

Coach's eye: resist the temptation to impose your own idea of what the team's defensive identity "should" be — watch for what actually, repeatedly happens, and sharpen that.

H30.2 OUR DEFENSIVE DNA — Identity, Sharpened

44 x 28 m • 8v5 • every defensive principle the team owns, combined in one fluid picture • 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Building team ⊙ Ball ➞ Press / cover shadow ■ Compact block line

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 30 • 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 44x28 metre area with dimension labels and a dashed compact block reference line. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 organised in a compact defensive shape, and five players in black bibs numbered 1–5 building. White football near a black player. A curved dashed line showing a press with cover shadow behind it. Title: 'OUR DEFENSIVE DNA — Identity, Sharpened'. Subtitle: '44 x 28 m • 8v5 • every defensive principle the team owns, combined in one fluid picture • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated wide view of a training area, eight green-bibbed players pressing and covering for each other in a clearly coordinated defensive picture against five black-bibbed building players, coach mobile and closely observing which patterns recur, notebook in hand.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated wide three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. Players in dark green bibs pressing and covering for each other in a clearly coordinated defensive shape against players in black bibs building possession. A coach moving around the pitch, closely observing the play with a notebook in hand. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture, amateur adult players of varied build. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 3 — HOLD THE IDENTITY (UNIT / TACTICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Expands the identified defensive identity into a full team practice, deliberately varying the building team's attacking approach — direct and vertical for one period, patient and possession-based for another — to test whether the team's defensive identity stays recognisably consistent regardless of the picture presented.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 defending outfield + goalkeeper vs 8 building
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** the defending team's goalkeeper organises the identified identity from behind, as established across the season

- **Team sizes:** 8 + GK v 8
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** nearest player restarts any stoppage
- **Coach position:** mobile, able to see the whole picture
- **Rotation method:** roles swap at the midpoint
- **Direction of play:** the building team attacks with two distinct approaches in sequence; the defending team works to hold its identity throughout

Practice walkthrough: The building team is instructed to attack directly and vertically for the first half of the practice, then patiently and through possession for the second half, while the defending team is coached simply to hold its identified defensive identity throughout, testing whether that identity remains genuinely recognisable against two very different attacking pictures.

Rules: Standard positional practice rules; a regain scores a point for the defending team, a clean progression scores a point for the building team.

Tactical roles: the full identified defensive identity from Practice 2, combined with a genuinely varied attacking picture.

Decision-making triggers: the full accumulated defensive set from the whole season, applied consistently regardless of the opponent's varying attacking approach.

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

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution quality of the identified defensive identity under two distinct attacking pictures.
Tactical	Consistency of defensive approach despite the varying attacking picture.
Physical	Moderate, sustained defensive movement throughout.
Psychological	Confidence in the team's own defensive identity, regardless of what the opponent presents.
Communication & leadership	The team recognising and confirming that its own defensive approach is holding steady.

Guided discovery questions:

1. Did the team's defensive identity look recognisably the same against both the direct and the patient attacking approach?

2. What specifically had to adapt (which trigger, which distance between lines) while the underlying identity stayed the same?
3. How does this connect to Week 21's block-choice work — is a settled defensive identity what actually makes tactical adaptability possible, rather than the opposite?
4. What would an opponent scouting this practice conclude about our defensive identity?

Progressions:

1. Add a third distinct attacking approach (e.g. a heavy overload on one side) inside the same practice.
2. Reduce the warning given before the building team's approach changes.
3. Reduce numbers to 7v7.

Regressions:

1. Extend the time given for each distinct attacking approach.
2. Reduce the building team's numbers temporarily, simplifying the picture.
3. Reintroduce Practice 2's more open format briefly if the identity has broken down under the varied pressure.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team's defending looks completely different against the two attacking pictures, rather than recognisably the same underlying identity	The team hasn't yet internalised its defensive identity deeply enough to apply it flexibly	Genuinely inconsistent decision-making, not just tactical adjustment, between the two periods	Stop	Short group intervention connecting directly to this week's principle	Resume
The team becomes so fixed on "our identity" that it fails to make any sensible tactical adjustment at all	Overcorrection — confusing identity with rigidity	The team ignores an obviously necessary adjustment because it doesn't match the identified pattern	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "is our identity a straitjacket, or does it flex with the picture?"	Resume

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

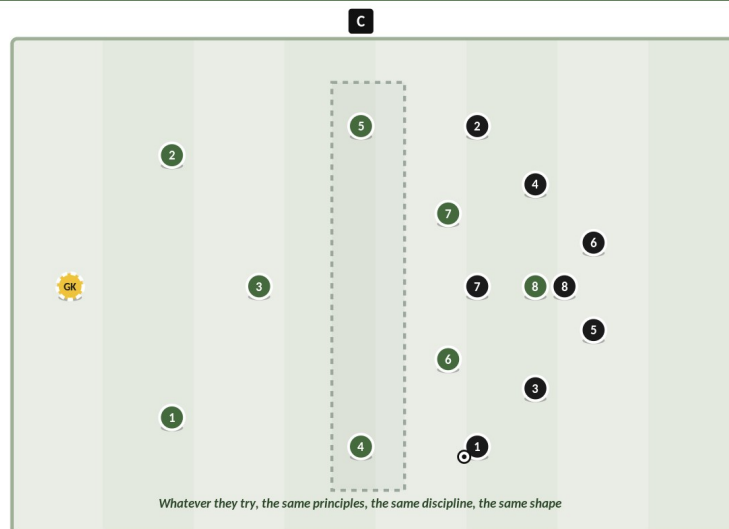
Success indicators:

- The team's underlying defensive identity is recognisable across both distinct attacking pictures.
- Tactical adjustments happen within a consistent overall defensive approach.
- The team can articulate, after the practice, what stayed the same and what adapted.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of whether the identity work has transferred — judge it specifically against whether an outside observer would say "that's clearly the same team defending" across both halves of the practice.

H30.3 HOLD THE IDENTITY — Defending Two Different Pictures

50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • the opposition attacks directly, then patiently — our defensive shape stays recognisably the same • 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Building team ● Goalkeeper ● Ball ■ Compact block line

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 30 • 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 compact block reference line. A goalkeeper in yellow on the left. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 organised in a compact defensive shape, and eight players in black bibs numbered 1–8 spread across the pitch. White football near a black player. Title: 'HOLD THE IDENTITY — Defending Two Different Pictures'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m • 8v8 + GK • the opposition attacks directly, then patiently — our defensive shape stays recognisably the same • 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated wide view of a positional practice, a compact, consistently organised green-bibbed defensive team, black-bibbed opponents attacking with a visibly different approach than earlier in the practice, 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 compact, consistently organised group of players in dark green bibs defending. Players in black bibs attacking with a visibly different style than earlier in the practice. 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 — KNOW WHO WE ARE (CONFIDENCE GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game that rewards a regain won through the team's own identified defensive strengths, reinforcing the week's technical and tactical work inside a genuinely fun context that sends players into the weekend confident.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 34 x 22 m
- **Players:** 14 outfield, rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 7
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** 2 full-size or portable goals, 6 flat markers
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** nearest sideline
- **Coach position:** sideline, central
- **Rotation method:** none required at this scale
- **Direction of play:** both directions, one goal per end

Practice walkthrough: A 7v7 game in which a regain won specifically through the team's own identified defensive pattern (from Practice 2's observations — whether that's aggressive pressing, patient jockeying, or collective shifting) is worth double, directly rewarding this week's central skill.

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

Tactical roles: the full identified defensive identity 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	Sharpened execution of the identified defensive pattern under game-realistic conditions.
Tactical	Correctly identifying when the identified pattern is genuinely available.
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 the team's own identified defensive strengths.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best defensive moment work?
2. What's one thing from this week — our possession or defensive identity — you feel most confident about heading into Saturday?
3. Why does knowing who we are, defensively, matter just as much as knowing it in possession?

Progressions:

1. Increase the bonus value for a regain won specifically through the identified pattern.
2. Add a genuine offside line.

3. Reduce the pitch width slightly to increase the demand on the identified pattern.

Regressions:

- 1. Allow any regain to count if the condition is proving too restrictive for the group's current confidence.
- 2. Increase the pitch size for more space and time.
- 3. Reduce to 5v5 for more individual involvement.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Players force the identified pattern even when a simpler defensive action is clearly better	The condition is chased rather than defended naturally	The identified pattern is attempted awkwardly rather than a simpler, more effective option	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that pattern really the right choice there?"	Resume
The team avoids the identified pattern altogether, defending overly cautiously	Uncertainty about whether the identity has genuinely been internalised yet	The identified pattern is never attempted even when clearly available	Stop	Short group intervention: "trust what we said we're good at defensively"	Resume

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

Success indicators:

- Regains following the identified defensive pattern increase across the practice.
- The team distinguishes genuine opportunities to use the pattern from forced ones.
- 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.



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 black player. Title: 'KNOW WHO WE ARE — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m · 7v7 · a regain won through the team's own identified defensive strengths 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 7v7 game, a green-bibbed player winning the ball cleanly through a clearly recognisable, practised defensive pattern, team-mates arriving in coordinated support, both full-size goals visible, coach on the touchline smiling and encouraging.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur 7v7 small-sided football game on a grass pitch with two full-size goals. A player in a dark green bib winning the ball cleanly through a clearly coordinated defensive action. Team-mates in matching dark green bibs arriving in coordinated support. 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: "In one sentence, what is our team's defensive identity?"

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

1. Play recognisably as this specific team, in possession and out of it, regardless of the opponent's approach.
2. Sharpen and commit to the identified possession identity rather than forcing an unfamiliar or generic style.
3. Sharpen and commit to the identified defensive identity rather than forcing an unfamiliar or generic style.

Three unit objectives:

1. **Back line and goalkeeper:** provide the specific contribution to the team's identity named this week, in both possession and defence.
2. **Midfield unit:** carry the team's identified patterns consistently, regardless of the picture the opponent presents.
3. **Front players:** apply the identified identity in the final third, rather than reverting to individual, unconnected play.

Individual role reminders:

- Know, in your own words, what our team's possession and defensive identity actually is.
- Trust the identity — don't abandon it just because the opponent's approach changes.
- Identity is a pattern of good decisions, not a rigid rule — let it flex sensibly with the picture.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Consistency of approach across different phases of a single match, regardless of the opponent's tactics.
- Number of goals or clean progressions built through the identified possession pattern.
- Number of regains won through the identified defensive pattern.
- Whether the team's style would be described as "recognisable" by an outside observer.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

Refining identity: possession and defensive principles

STRUCTURE	HOW THE POSSESSION IDENTITY TYPICALLY EXPRESSES ITSELF	HOW THE DEFENSIVE IDENTITY TYPICALLY EXPRESSES ITSELF	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	KEY RISK
4-3-3	Through the double pivot and front three's specific combination habits	Through the back four and front three's specific pressing and covering habits	The underlying, recognisable pattern of decisions	Mistaking a specific formation's mechanics for the actual identity, and losing the identity when the formation changes
3-4-3	Through the back three's extra body and the front three's specific combination habits	Through the back three and wing-backs' specific compactness and covering habits	The underlying, recognisable pattern of decisions	The same risk — confusing the shape with the identity, rather than recognising the identity as what travels between shapes

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.