



Week 32 — Performance Consolidation

Tags: `opposition-specific` `defend-in-behind` `set-pieces` `rest-defence` `full-squad-practice`

Weekly Overview

FIELD	DETAIL
Week number	32 of 36
Season phase	6 — Performance Consolidation
Core principle	Defend the space in behind (Tuesday)
Secondary principle	Rest defence (Thursday)
Previous match review focus	Apply the three routes below to the most recent fixture.
Weekly tactical problem	Tuesday completes the opposition-specific block's third and final picture — a fast, counter-attacking opponent who targets the space in behind the defensive line the moment possession is lost. Thursday delivers the Set-Piece Development Pathway's sixth milestone: maximising the programme built since Week 5 by teaching the team to adjust its routines to a specific opponent's defensive setup, and finally confirming exactly which player fills every role, with named contingencies, ahead of the season's most decisive fixtures.
Formation-neutral explanation	Defending the space in behind is about managing the relationship between the defensive line's height and the pace and timing of the recovery run behind it — not about a fixed distance from the halfway line. Set-piece maximisation is about recognising an opponent's specific defensive setup (zonal, man-to-man, or a mix) and selecting the pre-rehearsed option that setup is weakest against, rather than delivering the same routine regardless of who's defending it.
Example structural applications	A 4-3-3 team manages the space in behind through its back four's collective line-management and its holding midfielder's screening; the same team's corner routine adjusts its near-post runner's angle of attack depending on whether the opponent defends zonally or man-to-man. A 3-4-3 team manages the same space through its back three and the recovery pace of its wing-backs; its corner routine adjusts identically, because the routine's logic — attack the setup's weakness — travels independently of the team's own shape.

Match Review and Weekly Adjustment

Route A — Previous performance was strong. If the team played well, use this week to sharpen the specific detail — exact personnel, exact recovery-run timing — rather than introducing anything new; strong performances are the best possible foundation for this kind of fine confirmation work.

Route B — Previous performance exposed a tactical weakness. If the team was exposed by a fast counter-attack recently, or lost a set piece cheaply, this week answers both directly and should be treated as the week's central priority.

Route C — Attendance, facilities or player availability are disrupted. Both days scale to reduced numbers — the personnel-confirmation work is actually more useful, not less, when key players are absent, since it surfaces exactly which contingencies need rehearsing before they're needed for real.

Tuesday — Session 63

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	63 of 72
Week	32
Season phase	6 — Performance Consolidation
Training day	Tuesday
Session theme	Opposition-specific: fast counter-attacking opponent
Short summary	Completes the opposition-specific block by preparing the team for a fast, direct counter-attacking opponent — managing the defensive line's height, timing recovery runs into the space in behind, and stopping a break in its first few seconds rather than chasing it once it's already underway.
Tags	`opposition-specific` `defend-in-behind` `transition-defending`
Primary learning objective	The team manages the space in behind a high or engaged defensive line effectively against fast, direct opposition.
Secondary learning objective	The team recognises the moment a fast counter-attack begins and reacts to stop it in its first few seconds.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: fewer transition goals conceded.
Expected tactical outcome	Fewer clean runs in behind the defensive line, and more counter-attacks stopped before they develop fully.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high — repeated sprint-recovery actions.
Recommended intensity	7–8 / 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; sweeping behind the defensive line against fast direct balls is coached explicitly.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 50 x 36 m (Practice 4).
Area layout	A full-width zone for Practice 2, a moderate transition-focused area for Practice 3, full size for Practice 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 reduces to 6v5 + GK; Practice 3 becomes 5v5; Practice 4 becomes 6v6.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 4 can extend to 9v9.
Contingency — restricted space	All three practices scale proportionally; the line-management principle survives at any scale, though the space to actually sprint into should not be compressed too far.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

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

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:10-0:25	15 min	Technical practice — <i>Guard the Space Behind</i>	Club green
0:25-0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27-0:42	15 min	Skill game — <i>Stop the Break</i>	Dark green
0:42-0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44-1:00	16 min	Conditioned match — <i>Face the Counter</i>	Black
1:00-1:01	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — SCAN AND SPRINT (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Warms the body for repeated sprint-recovery actions and sharpens the habit of scanning over the shoulder before a ball is played in behind.

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

Walkthrough: Paired movement work — a lead runner sprints on a visual cue while a trailing defender scans, reacts, and recovers to match their pace, gradually increasing distance and reaction demand.

Rules: None beyond standard movement-based warm-up play.

Coaching points:

- *Physical:* explosive first-step reaction and recovery sprint mechanics.
- *Tactical:* scanning before the moment the ball is actually played.

PRACTICE 2 — GUARD THE SPACE BEHIND (TECHNICAL PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Trains the defensive line to manage the space behind it against fast, direct balls — reading when to hold the line, when to drop, and how the recovery run behind a beaten defender actually covers the danger rather than simply chasing the ball.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 34 m
- **Players:** 8 defending outfield + goalkeeper vs 6 fast counter-attacking opponents
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** full — sweeping behind the line for any ball played over the top, communicating the line's height

- **Team sizes:** 8 + GK v 6
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 3 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart:** coach or attacking group restarts, frequently feeding fast balls in

behind

- **Coach position:** mobile, positioned to judge the timing of the defensive line
- **Rotation method:** groups rotate every five minutes
- **Direction of play:** the defending team works to hold its line and cover the

space behind it

Practice walkthrough: The attacking group repeatedly plays fast, direct balls into the space behind the defending line. The defending eight, organised by their goalkeeper, must decide collectively whether to hold the line and play for offside where legitimately available, or drop and defend the space directly — and whichever defender is beaten must be covered immediately by a team-mate's recovery run rather than left in a foot race alone.

Rules: A ball successfully defended (won cleanly, put out of play under control, or forced into a low-quality shot) counts as a successful repetition for the defending team; a clean run through on goal counts against them.

Tactical roles:

- *Individual:* whichever defender is beaten sprints to recover goal-side rather than chasing the ball directly.
- *Unit:* the whole line moves together, holding or dropping as one, not individually.
- *Team:* not applicable at this scale.
- *Transition:* this practice is the direct partner to Week 31's second-ball work — managing the moment after possession is already lost.

Decision-making triggers:

- Ball played in behind with the line legitimately organised → hold and play for offside where available.
- Line beaten or disorganised → drop immediately and defend the space directly.
- A defender beaten in a foot race → nearest cover player recovers goal-side immediately, not laterally.

Communication language used: "hold," "drop," "cover," "recover."

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Recovery-sprint mechanics and defensive body shape while running back toward goal.
Tactical	Correct collective decision to hold or drop, made together rather than individually.
Physical	Repeated explosive recovery sprints.
Psychological	Composure under genuine pace threat rather than panicking into the ball.
Communication & leadership	The goalkeeper and back line organising the line's height together, out loud.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What tells the line it's safe to hold, and what tells it to drop instead?
2. If a defender is beaten for pace, what's the single most important thing their nearest team-mate should do?
 1. How is this different from — and connected to — the compactness work we did against a direct, physical opponent last week?
 1. What's the goalkeeper's job in all of this, beyond just stopping the shot?

Progressions:

1. Add a seventh attacking player, testing the line under greater numerical pressure.
2. Introduce a genuine offside line, requiring accurate legal judgement.
3. Add a scoring consequence for a defended ball that leads directly into the team's own counter-attack.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the attacking group to four players.
2. Widen the practice area for more recovery time.
3. Slow the frequency of balls played in behind, allowing the line to reset between repetitions.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The line holds when it should have dropped, gifting a clean run in behind	Miscommunication or a slow collective decision	A clean run through on goal with the line still high and unorganised	Stop	Freeze the picture, show the correct read and the correct call	Resume
A beaten defender is left in an isolated foot race with no cover	The nearest team-mate is slow to react or unsure of their responsibility	The beaten defender racing alone with no support arriving	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "who else should have been moving the instant that ball was played?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: a mix of *freeze-and-show* for the line-management decision and *questioning* for the covering responsibility.

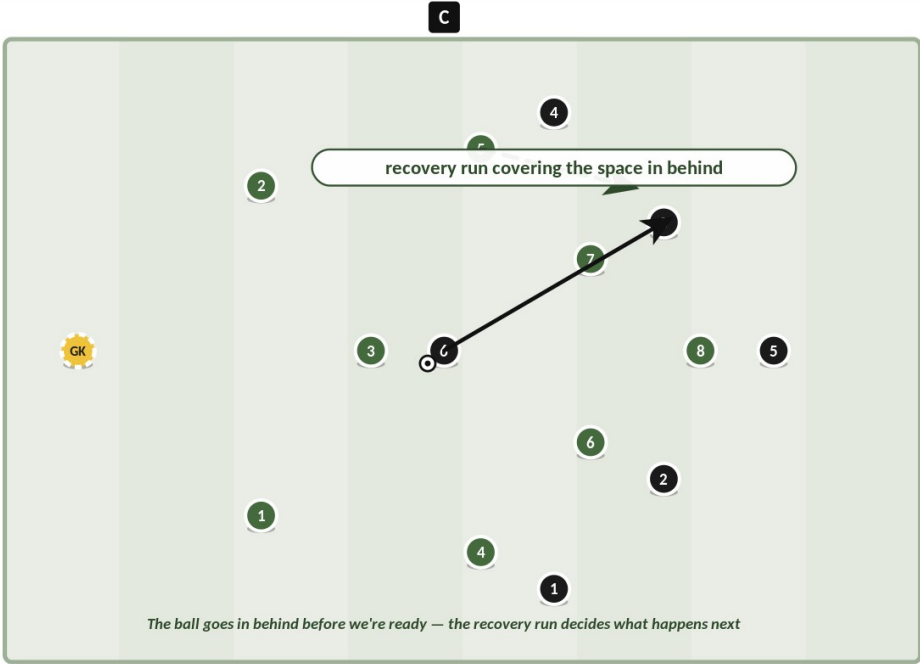
Success indicators:

- The line's hold-or-drop decisions are made collectively and correctly.
- Beaten defenders are consistently covered by a team-mate's recovery run.
- The number of clean runs through on goal decreases as the practice progresses.

Coach's eye: watch the team-mates around the ball, not just the ball itself — the practice's real lesson is in who moves the instant the ball is played, not in the individual duel that follows.

T32.2 GUARD THE SPACE BEHIND — Technical Practice

50 x 34 m • 8v6 + GK • defending the space in behind a high line against fast, direct balls • 15 minutes



Defending team

Fast counter-attacking opponent

Goalkeeper

Ball

Recovery run / cover the space in behind

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 50x34 metre area with dimension labels. A goalkeeper in yellow on the left. Eight players in dark green bibs numbered 1–8 organised in a defensive line, and six players in black bibs numbered 1–6 spread wider. White football near a green player. A black solid arrow showing a fast direct pass into the space behind the defensive line, and a curved dashed line showing a defender's recovery run covering the danger. Title: 'GUARD THE SPACE BEHIND — Technical Practice'. Subtitle: '50 x 34 m • 8v6 + GK • defending the space in behind a high line against fast, direct balls • 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, a green-bibbed defender sprinting to recover goal-side to cover a black-bibbed attacker running onto a fast ball played in behind, goalkeeper alert and off their line, coach observing the timing of the defensive line closely.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated wide three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of adult amateur football training. A player in a dark green bib sprinting to recover goal-side, covering a player in a black bib running onto a fast ball played into space behind the defensive line. A goalkeeper in yellow alert and off the goal line, ready to sweep. A coach observing closely from the side. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture, amateur adult players of varied build showing visible urgency. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 3 — STOP THE BREAK (SKILL GAME)

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

Tactical purpose: Sharpens the team's ability to stop a fast counter-attack in its earliest moments, rewarding an immediate, coordinated reaction over a later, desperate recovery.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 40 x 26 m
- **Players:** 13 outfield, rotating
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers rotate through
- **Team sizes:** 7 v 6
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers, 4 cones marking a defined "break-start zone"
- **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:** both directions, possession-based scoring

Practice walkthrough: Whenever possession changes inside the marked "break-start zone," a three-second countdown begins. If the team that has just lost the ball wins it back, or forces it out of play, within those three seconds, they score a bonus point — directly rewarding the fastest possible reaction to losing the ball, rather than a slower, more resigned recovery.

Rules: As described; otherwise standard small-sided-game rules, with goals worth three points.

Tactical roles: collective, immediate reaction to a turnover, applying the line-management habits from Practice 2 under sharper time pressure.

Decision-making triggers:

- Possession lost in the break-start zone → the whole team reacts immediately, not just the player who lost the ball.
- Three-second window passed → settle into the calmer recovery shape rehearsed in Practice 2.

Communication language used: "hold," "drop," "cover," "recover," plus urgent calls in the immediate seconds after losing the ball.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Quality of the immediate pressing or recovery action in the first three seconds.
Tactical	Correctly reading whether the fast window is still open or has already passed.
Physical	Sharp, explosive reaction speed.
Psychological	Urgency without panic in the moment possession is lost.
Communication & leadership	Immediate, loud calls the instant the ball is turned over.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What's different about how we react in the first three seconds compared to later?

2. Who is responsible for starting that immediate reaction — just the player who lost the ball, or everyone?

1. What happens if we miss the three-second window — what should we do instead?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the countdown window to two seconds.
2. Increase the break-start zone's size, testing the reaction across more of the pitch.
1. Add a genuine goal at each end to connect the reaction directly to real outcomes.

Regressions:

1. Extend the countdown window to five seconds.
2. Reduce to 5v4 for more individual involvement and clarity.
3. Allow the coach to call "now!" the instant possession changes, until the group reacts independently.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
Only the player who lost the ball reacts, while team-mates stay passive	The reaction is treated as an individual responsibility rather than a team one	One player pressing while the rest of the team stands off	Stop	Short group intervention: "that reaction belongs to everyone, not just one player"	Resume
The team keeps pressing desperately well after the window has passed	Difficulty recognising when the moment has gone	Chaotic, disorganised pressing several seconds after the turnover	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "was that window still open, or had it already closed?"	Resume

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

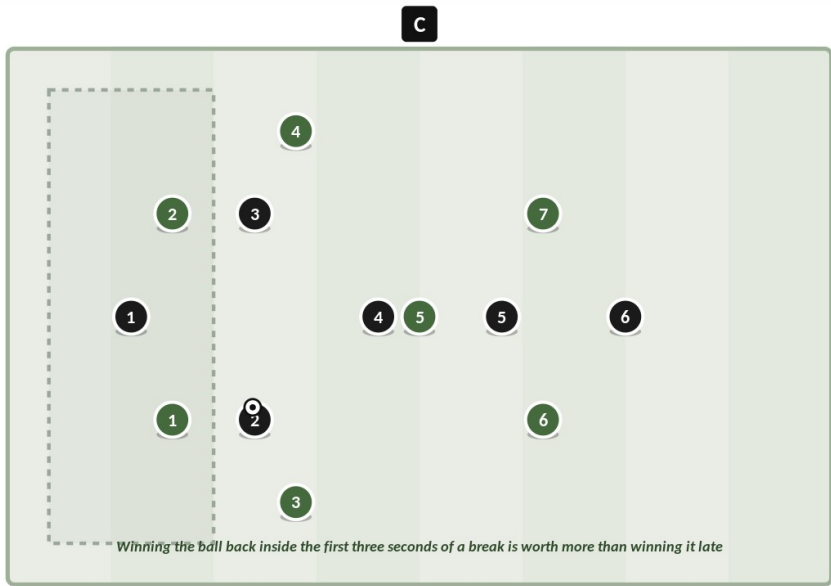
Success indicators:

- The whole team reacts immediately and collectively to a turnover inside the zone.
- The team recognises correctly when the fast window has closed and settles into the calmer recovery shape.
- Bonus points are won more frequently as the practice progresses.

Coach's eye: watch the players away from the ball in the instant possession changes — a genuinely collective reaction, not just the nearest player's effort, is the actual teaching point.

T32.3 STOP THE BREAK — Small-Sided Game

40 x 26 m · 7v6 · transition-focused game — stopping a fast break early is worth a bonus point · 15 minutes



● Defending team ● Counter-attacking opponent ● Ball ■ Break-start zone

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 40x26 metre area with dimension labels and a shaded rectangular zone marked 'break-start zone' in one 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: 'STOP THE BREAK — Small-Sided Game'. Subtitle: '40 x 26 m · 7v6 · transition-focused game — stopping a fast break early is worth a bonus point · 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 sideline view of a lively small-sided game, several green-bibbed players reacting immediately and collectively the instant the ball is lost, closing down a black-bibbed opponent inside a marked zone, coach on the touchline with a stopwatch, timing the reaction.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter sideline photograph-style illustration of an adult amateur small-sided football game on a grass pitch. Several players in dark green bibs reacting immediately and collectively the instant the ball is lost, closing down a player in a black bib together. A coach on the touchline holding a stopwatch, closely timing the reaction. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture, amateur adult players of varied build showing visible urgency and energy. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

PRACTICE 4 — FACE THE COUNTER (CONDITIONED MATCH)

Duration: 16 minutes · **Training load:** High

Tactical purpose: Confirms the week's principle at full match scale, with one team specifically instructed to play fast, direct counter-attacking football throughout, testing whether the defending team's line-management and immediate reaction habits hold up under sustained, realistic match pressure.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 50 x 36 m (half pitch)
- **Players:** 16 outfield + 2 goalkeepers
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** both keepers play their own-goal role; the defending team's goalkeeper is coached specifically on organising the line and sweeping behind it

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

Practice walkthrough: One team is instructed to play fast and direct throughout — committing numbers forward quickly on any regain, targeting the space in behind immediately — while the other team applies everything rehearsed in Practices 2 and 3: managing the defensive line's height, covering a beaten defender, and reacting immediately to any turnover.

Rules: Standard conditioned-match rules.

Tactical roles: the full line-management-and-reaction identity from Practices 2–3, applied for the first time against a genuinely live, fast counter-attacking opponent.

Decision-making triggers: the full set built across the session, applied under match-realistic pressure and consequence.

Communication language used: "hold," "drop," "cover," "recover."

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Recovery-sprint quality and defensive body shape under sustained match pressure.
Tactical	Line management and immediate reaction habits maintained across a full conditioned match.
Physical	Sustained high-intensity, repeated sprint-recovery effort.
Psychological	Composure under sustained pace threat rather than fatigue-driven panic.
Communication & leadership	The back line and goalkeeper organising the line vocally throughout, without needing constant coach input.

Guided discovery questions:

1. Did our line-management decisions stay sharp as fatigue set in later in the practice?
1. What's the very first sign that tells us we're facing a fast, counter-attacking

opponent?

1. How does tonight's work connect to what we rehearsed last week against a direct, physical opponent — what's genuinely different, and what's the same?

Progressions:

1. Extend the counter-attacking team's instructions to include a genuine numerical overload on the break.

1. Add a scoreline pressure (e.g. the counter-attacking team is "chasing" and committing extra numbers forward).

1. Reduce numbers to 7v7 for a sharper individual recovery demand.

Regressions:

1. Reduce the counter-attacking team's directness temporarily if the defending team is being overwhelmed.

1. Increase the practice area for more recovery time.

2. Pause briefly to reset the defensive line if it has broken down completely.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The defensive line's decisions become slower and less accurate as fatigue builds	Physical and mental discipline fading under sustained pressure	Increasingly hesitant or mistimed hold-or-drop decisions later in the practice	Stop	Short group intervention resetting the line's communication	Resume
The team over-commits numbers forward after winning the ball, leaving itself exposed to a second fast break	Excitement at winning the ball overriding defensive discipline	Too many players forward, too few positioned to defend an immediate second loss	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what did we leave exposed by committing everyone forward there?"	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 defensive line's hold-or-drop decisions stay sharp for the duration of the practice.

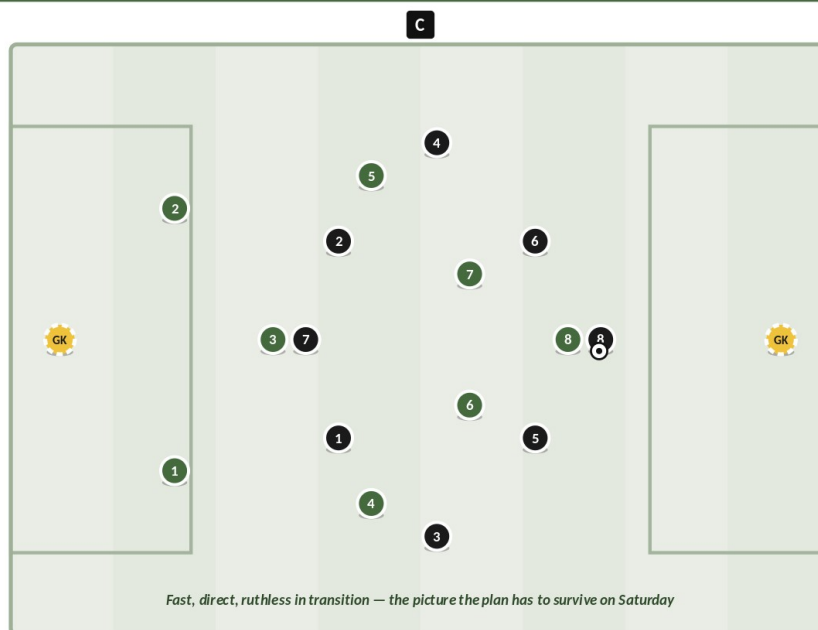
- Beaten defenders are consistently covered.

- The team reacts immediately and collectively to any turnover, even late in the practice.

Coach's eye: this practice is the week's clearest test of Tuesday's teaching — judge it specifically against whether the defensive line's discipline at minute fifteen still looks like the discipline it started with.

T32.4 FACE THE COUNTER — Conditioned Match

50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • one side plays fast, direct counter-attacking football throughout • 17 minutes



● Defending team ● Counter-attacking opponent ● 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 black player. Title: 'FACE THE COUNTER — Conditioned Match'. Subtitle: '50 x 36 m (half pitch) • 8v8 + GKs • one side plays fast, direct counter-attacking football throughout • 17 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, black-bibbed players breaking forward at pace on a fast counter-attack, a green-bibbed defender recovering at full sprint to cover the space behind the line, 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 black bibs breaking forward at pace on a fast counter-attack. A player in a dark green bib recovering at full sprint to cover the space behind the defensive line. 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 showing visible effort. Professional sports-photography style, high resolution, landscape orientation, no club badges, sponsor logos, or identifiable real players."

REFLECTION (1 MINUTE)

One question to the group: "What's the very first sign that tells us we're facing a fast, counter-attacking opponent — and how quickly did we spot it tonight?"

Thursday — Session 64

FIELD	DETAIL
Session number	64 of 72
Week	32
Season phase	6 — Performance Consolidation
Training day	Thursday
Session theme	Set-piece maximisation
Short summary	Delivers the Set-Piece Development Pathway's sixth milestone — adjusting the club's established routines to a specific opponent's defensive setup, and finally confirming exactly which player fills every role in every routine, with named contingencies, ahead of the season's most decisive fixtures.
Tags	`set-pieces` `rest-defence` `opposition-specific`
Primary learning objective	The team selects and adjusts the correct pre-rehearsed set-piece option based on a specific opponent's defensive setup.
Secondary learning objective	Every routine in the programme has a confirmed, named set of personnel and contingencies, with rest defence fully integrated into every restart.
Match connection	This week's named match-day connection: fewer transition goals conceded.
Expected tactical outcome	Set pieces that are genuinely adjusted to the opponent in front of the team, executed by a squad that knows exactly who is doing what, with the whole team protected against a lost-possession counter-attack throughout.
Expected physical load	Moderate-high.
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; reading the opponent's marking system and communicating it to the defensive set-piece structure is coached explicitly.
Pitch dimensions	Largest area this week is 40 x 28 m (Practice 3, box and surrounding area).
Area layout	A corner-focused area for Practices 2 and 3, a small-sided area for Practice 4.
Contingency — lower attendance (10–13)	Practice 2 and 3 reduce to a five-a-side version of the routine (fewer rest-defence players, roles doubled up); Practice 4 becomes 5v5.
Contingency — higher attendance (20+)	Practice 3 can add a second live routine (a wide free kick) inside the same time block.
Contingency — restricted space	The routine practices need a genuine penalty box and corner area and should not be significantly compressed; Practice 4 scales freely.

TIMELINE (60 MINUTES)

TIME	DURATION	PHASE	COLOUR CODE
0:00–0:10	10 min	Arrival & warm-up — <i>Set Piece Reset</i>	Light green
0:10–0:25	15 min	Technical / set-piece practice — <i>Reading Their Setup</i>	Club green
0:25–0:27	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:27–0:42	15 min	Live rehearsal — <i>Confirm the Personnel</i>	Dark green
0:42–0:44	2 min	Water break / transition	—
0:44–1:00	16 min	Confidence game — <i>The Maximised Set</i>	Black
1:00–1:01	1 min	Reflection	—

PRACTICE 1 — SET PIECE RESET (ARRIVAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Refreshes delivery technique across the programme's core dead-ball actions before the session's more detailed work begins.

Organisation: Pairs and small groups around the penalty area. No goalkeeper requirement — both keepers join, working specifically on distribution and shot-stopping from set-piece-realistic angles.

Walkthrough: Rotating technical stations — corner delivery, free-kick delivery, and near/far-post finishing — each player cycling through all three briefly to refresh technique before the detailed work begins.

Rules: None beyond standard technical practice.

Coaching points:

- *Technical:* clean contact and consistent delivery height/pace across all restart types.
- *Psychological:* confidence and focus heading into a detail-heavy session.

PRACTICE 2 — READING THEIR SETUP (TECHNICAL / SET-PIECE PRACTICE)

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

Tactical purpose: Teaches the team to recognise an opponent's specific corner- defending setup — zonal, man-to-man, or a mixed system — and to select the pre-rehearsed option from the season's programme that setup is weakest against, rather than delivering the same routine regardless of who's defending it.

Set-Piece Programme fields:

FIELD	DETAIL
Purpose	To read an opponent's specific corner-defending system before the ball is delivered, and select whichever of the club's established options (Week 5's original near-post/far-post routine, or Week 23's near-post twist) exploits that system's particular weakness.
Player roles and starting positions	Deliverer (C): stands over the ball, right-side corner position. Near-post runner (1): starts on the edge of the six-yard box. Far-post runner (2): starts on the far edge of the penalty area. Screen (3): legal, stationary position in the goalkeeper's early sightline. Rebound player (4): just outside the penalty area, central. Rest-defence players (5–8): spread outside the box, exactly as established since Week 5.
Reading a zonal system	Defenders occupy fixed zones rather than marking individual attackers — identifiable by defenders standing in a roughly even line across the six-yard box, moving to the ball rather than to a runner. The weakness is the small gaps between adjacent zones, which a sharply-timed near-post run can attack before the zone closes.
Reading a man-to-man system	Each defender is matched to a specific attacker and moves with them — identifiable by defenders standing close to individual attackers rather than in a line. The weakness is a blocker or screen creating separation, or a late-arriving runner whose marker is slow to pick them up.
Reading a mixed system	Some defenders zonal, some man-marking specific dangerous attackers — identifiable by an uneven mix of both pictures. The weakness is usually at the boundary between the two systems, where responsibility for a runner crossing between zones can be unclear.
Delivery type	Whipped in-swinging near-post ball against a zonal system; the bent far-post option (Week 23) or a blocker-created separation against a man-to-man system; the coach or deliverer identifies the boundary weakness live against a mixed system.
Runs	As established in Weeks 5 and 23, with the specific run selected based on which system is read, called clearly by the deliverer before the ball is struck.
Legal blocks/screens note	The screen occupies space legally and without impeding, exactly as taught since Week 5 — particularly important against a man-to-man system, where legal separation is the routine's main weapon.
Rebound positions	Player 4 positioned centrally, just outside the box, unchanged regardless of the opponent's system.
Rest defence	Players 5–8 spread across the width of the pitch just outside the box — this week's secondary principle, and unchanged regardless of which attacking option is selected.
Transition protection	If possession is lost, the nearest rest-defence player delays immediately, connecting directly to Tuesday's work on stopping a

FIELD	DETAIL
	fast break in its first few seconds.
Opposition cues	A defensive line standing evenly across the six-yard box → zonal. Defenders standing tight to individual attackers → man-to-man. A mixed picture → read the specific boundary weakness live.
Contingency for a missing key player	As established in Week 9 and reconfirmed this week (see Practice 3) — every role has a named second option.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 30 x 22 m (corner area and penalty box)
- **Players:** 8 attacking vs 6 defending + goalkeeper
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** full — organising the defending system and communicating it clearly enough for the coach to use as a live teaching cue
- **Team sizes:** 8 v 6 + GK
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions, 1 full-size or portable goal
- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 4 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** the marked right-side corner position
- **Coach position:** central, behind the attacking shape, able to see the defending system clearly

- **Rotation method:** the defending team's system is changed by the coach every few repetitions — zonal, then man-to-man, then mixed

- **Direction of play:** toward the one goal, from the fixed corner restart

Practice walkthrough: The defending team is instructed by the coach to defend zonally for several repetitions, then man-to-man, then in a mixed system, without the attacking team being told in advance which system is in use. The attacking team must read the system as it sets up and select the correct pre-rehearsed option before the corner is delivered.

Rules: As described in the Set-Piece Programme fields above; the deliverer must call the selected option clearly before striking the ball.

Tactical roles: individual (deliverer reading the system and calling the option), unit (runners executing the selected option), team (rest defence, unchanged throughout), transition (immediate reaction if possession is lost).

Decision-making triggers:

- Defenders in an even zonal line → call the near-post option.
- Defenders tight to individual attackers → call the far-post or blocker-separation option.
- Mixed picture → identify and attack the specific boundary weakness.

Communication language used: "Zonal," "Man," "Mixed," plus the established "Near!" / "Far!" call.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Delivery accuracy matched correctly to the selected option.
Tactical	Speed and accuracy of reading the defending system before the ball is struck.

CORNER	POINT
Physical	Explosive, well-timed movement into the correct target zone for the system read.
Psychological	Composure to read the picture calmly rather than defaulting to the same option every time.
Communication & leadership	The deliverer or a designated reader calling the system and the selected option clearly.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What specifically tells us a defending team is set up zonally rather than man-to-man?
2. Why does a zonal system's weakness differ from a man-to-man system's weakness?
3. Who should be responsible for reading the system and making the call — and why does that need to be decided in advance, not improvised on the day?
4. What happens if we read the system wrong?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the time allowed to read the system and call the option before delivery.
2. Add a genuine mixed system with a deliberately ambiguous boundary.
3. Add a fully live, competitive defending team reacting realistically to whichever option is called.

Regressions:

1. Allow the coach to call the system out loud before each repetition.
2. Walk through each system separately, uninterrupted, before mixing them.
3. Reduce to two runners and one rest-defence player for a simpler first version.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The team calls the same option regardless of which system is actually in front of them	Habit and comfort with one preferred option	The same call made against clearly different defending systems	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: identify the system together before calling again	Resume
The reading takes too long, and the corner is delivered late or rushed	Genuine uncertainty about how to read the system quickly	A long pause before the option is called, or a rushed, low-quality delivery	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what was the one clue that would have told us faster?"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: heavy on *freeze-and-correct* early, shifting to *questioning* as the reading skill develops.

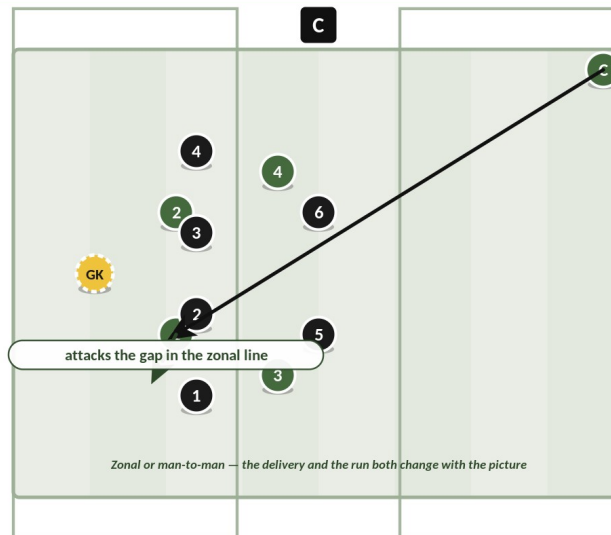
Success indicators:

- The team reads the defending system accurately and consistently.
- The correct pre-rehearsed option is selected and called before the ball is struck.
- Delivery quality is maintained even under the added reading demand.

Coach's eye: this is a genuinely new skill for the squad — reading an opponent's system live rather than executing a single fixed routine — so expect it to take longer than a typical technical practice to click, and be patient with early hesitation.

H32.2 READING THEIR SETUP — Set-Piece Programme

Right-side corner, out-swinging • choosing the near-post or far-post option based on the opposition's marking system • 15 minutes



● Attacking team ● Zonal-marking opponent ● GK ○ Ball ➔ Near-post run (vs. zonal gap)

Castlewellan Town FC • Senior Coaching Curriculum • Week 32 • Diagrams not to scale

AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing a corner area of a football pitch with penalty box markings and a full-size goal with a goalkeeper in yellow. A player in a dark green bib marked 'C' stands over the ball at the right-side corner arc. Four players in dark green bibs numbered 1–4 in the penalty area. Six players in black bibs in an even line across the six-yard box, representing a zonal defending system. White football near the corner player. A black solid arrow showing the corner delivery to the near post, and a curved dashed line showing a run attacking a gap in the defending line. Title: 'READING THEIR SETUP — Set-Piece Programme'. Subtitle: 'Right-side corner, out-swinging • choosing the near-post or far-post option based on the opposition's marking system • 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 penalty area during a corner routine, defenders organised in a clearly zonal line across the six-yard box, a green-bibbed attacker timing a run to attack the gap between two defenders as the corner is delivered, coach standing centrally, closely reading the picture alongside the players.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter view of a penalty area during an adult amateur football corner-kick routine. Defenders in black bibs organised in a clearly zonal line across the six-yard box. A player in a dark green bib timing a run to attack the gap between two defenders as the corner is delivered from the right. A coach standing centrally near the box, closely observing the picture. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture and 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."

PRACTICE 3 — CONFIRM THE PERSONNEL (LIVE REHEARSAL)

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

Tactical purpose: Finalises, by name, exactly which player fills every role in every set-piece routine the club owns, with a named contingency for each role, ensuring the whole squad walks into the season's decisive fixtures with total clarity — no role left ambiguous, no absence left unplanned for.

Organisation:

- **Pitch dimensions:** 30 x 22 m (corner area and penalty box)
- **Players:** 8 attacking vs 6 defending + goalkeeper
- **Goalkeeper involvement:** full — including confirming who organises the defensive set-piece structure in their absence, if ever needed

- **Team sizes:** 8 v 6 + GK
- **Neutrals:** none
- **Equipment:** flat markers for starting positions, 1 full-size or portable goal, a written or verbal roster of confirmed roles

- **Starting positions:** as shown in the diagram
- **Ball supply:** 4 spare balls with the coach
- **Restart location:** the marked right-side corner position
- **Coach position:** central, with the confirmed personnel list to hand
- **Rotation method:** none — this practice deliberately uses the confirmed first-choice personnel throughout, with contingency substitutions rehearsed explicitly partway through
- **Direction of play:** toward the one goal, from the fixed corner restart

Practice walkthrough: The coach confirms, out loud and by name, every attacking and defending role across the club's full set-piece programme — deliverer, near-post runner, far-post runner, screen, rebound player, and each rest-defence position — plus a named second option for every role. The routine is then run at full pace with the first-choice personnel, followed by a deliberate rehearsal with one or two key players "removed" (simulating a Saturday absence) to confirm the named contingencies actually function under live conditions.

Rules: As described in Week 9's Set-Piece Programme fields; the personnel and contingencies confirmed this week are treated as the club's settled reference point for the remainder of the season.

Tactical roles: individual (each named role, first-choice and contingency), unit (the full attacking group functioning with either personnel set), team (rest defence, fully integrated), transition (the immediate reaction if possession is lost, rehearsed with both first-choice and contingency personnel).

Decision-making triggers:

- First-choice personnel available → run the routine as confirmed.
- A key player absent → the named contingency steps into the vacated role without hesitation or renegotiation on the day.

Communication language used: the full season's set-piece language — "Screen," "Lock," "Delay," "Time," "Near!" / "Far!" — plus each player's confirmed role name.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Execution quality unchanged between first-choice and contingency personnel.
Tactical	Total clarity of role and responsibility across the whole programme.
Physical	Sustained, focused repetition rather than high-intensity load.

CORNER	POINT
Psychological	Confidence that every role, including every contingency, has a genuine, rehearsed answer.
Communication & leadership	Players confirming their own role and their contingency responsibility out loud.

Guided discovery questions:

1. If our first-choice deliverer were unavailable on Saturday, who takes over — and have we actually rehearsed that, or just assumed it?

1. Why does confirming this now, rather than leaving it until matchday, matter?
2. What's the connection between rest defence being fully set here and what we practised on Tuesday about stopping a fast counter-attack?

Progressions:

1. Rehearse a second contingency scenario — two key players absent simultaneously.
2. Add a fully live, competitive defending team for the contingency rehearsal.
3. Extend the personnel confirmation to a second routine (a wide free kick) inside the same block.

Regressions:

1. Confirm personnel for the attacking corner routine alone before adding further routines in a future session.

1. Walk the contingency substitution through at low speed before running it live.
2. Reduce to the core five roles (deliverer, near post, far post, screen, rebound) before adding rest-defence personnel.

Common problems and corrections:

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	COACH RECOGNISES BY	STOP OR FLOW?	INTERVENTION	RESTART
The contingency player hesitates or looks unsure when stepping into a vacated role	The contingency has been named but never actually rehearsed live before this week	Visible hesitation or incorrect positioning when the substitution is made	Stop	Freeze-and-correct: walk the contingency player through the role explicitly	Resume
Players revert to asking "who's doing what?" on the day rather than trusting the confirmed roster	The confirmation hasn't yet been treated as settled and final	Questions or confusion about roles that should already be answered	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Reinforce: "this is now confirmed — trust it"	Resume

Coach interventions used in this practice: a mix of *freeze-and-correct* for the contingency rehearsal and firm *reinforcement* of the settled roster.

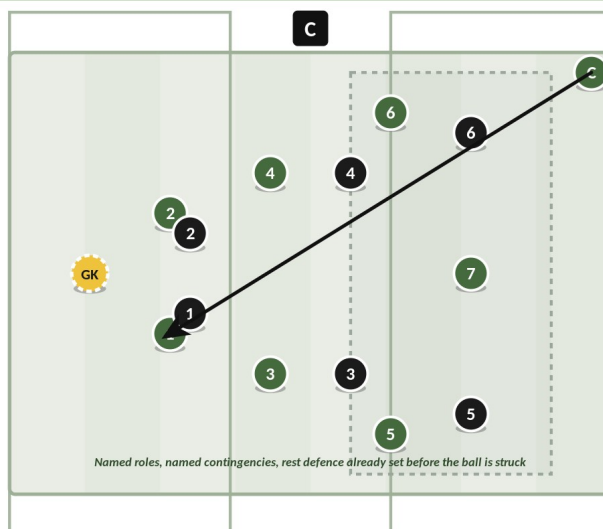
Success indicators:

- Every role in the programme has a named first choice and a named, rehearsed contingency.
- The contingency substitution functions at full pace without a drop in quality.
- Players can state their own role and contingency responsibility without hesitation.

Coach's eye: this practice's value is almost entirely in the contingency rehearsal, not the first-choice repetitions — a routine that only works with every first-choice player present is not actually a reliable routine.

H32.3 CONFIRM THE PERSONNEL — Live Rehearsal

Right-side corner, out-swinging · every named role and its contingency rehearsed live, with rest defence set behind it · 15 minutes



Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · Week 32 · Diagrams not to scale

AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style, showing a corner area of a football pitch with penalty box markings and a full-size goal with a goalkeeper in yellow. A player in a dark green bib marked 'C' stands over the ball at the right-side corner arc. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 in and around the penalty area, with a shaded zone behind the box labelled as the rest-defence line. Six players in black bibs defending. White football near the corner player. Title: 'CONFIRM THE PERSONNEL — Live Rehearsal'. Subtitle: 'Right-side corner, out-swinging · every named role and its contingency rehearsed live, with rest defence set behind it · 15 minutes'. Legend row at bottom. High-resolution landscape vector illustration, clear typography, no decorative elements, no club badges or logos."

Realistic illustration — description: Elevated view of a full corner routine in rehearsal, every attacking player in a clearly held, confirmed position including a line of rest-defence players positioned just outside the box, coach standing nearby with a clipboard or notes confirming roles aloud.

AI image-generation prompt (realistic illustration): "Elevated three-quarter view of a penalty area during an adult amateur football corner-kick rehearsal. Attacking players in dark green bibs holding clearly confirmed positions, including a line of players positioned just outside the penalty box as rest defence. A coach standing nearby with a clipboard, confirming roles aloud. Overcast evening light, realistic grass texture and 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."

PRACTICE 4 — THE MAXIMISED SET (CONFIDENCE GAME)

Duration: 16 minutes · **Training load:** Moderate

Tactical purpose: Closes the session with a competitive, enjoyable game in which every restart is a set piece and the opposition's marking system is announced only moments before delivery, rewarding the reading-and-selecting skill from Practice 2 inside a genuinely fun, high-repetition context.

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, or a marked corner/free-kick position for

restarts

- **Coach position:** sideline, central, calling the defending system just before

each restart

- **Rotation method:** none required at this scale
- **Direction of play:** both directions, one goal per end

Practice walkthrough: A 7v7 game in which every restart (throw-in, free kick, or corner) is played as a set piece, with the coach calling out the defending team's marking system ("Zonal!", "Man!", "Mixed!") just before each one, requiring the attacking team to read and select the correct option under realistic time pressure.

Rules: As described; a goal scored directly from a correctly-read set-piece option is worth double.

Tactical roles: the full reading-and-selecting identity from Practice 2, combined with the confirmed personnel from Practice 3, applied inside free-flowing, competitive play.

Decision-making triggers: the full set from Practices 2–3, applied spontaneously and repeatedly as restarts occur naturally during play.

Communication language used: the full season's set-piece language.

Coaching points:

CORNER	POINT
Technical	Sharpened execution under genuine competitive and time pressure.
Tactical	Fast, accurate reading and selection of the correct pre-rehearsed option.
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	Players calling the read and the selected option to each other under time pressure.

Guided discovery questions:

1. What made tonight's best set-piece read work?
2. What's one thing from this week — reading the system, or knowing your own confirmed role — you feel most confident about heading into a decisive fixture?

1. Why does maximising something the team has already built matter more, this late in the season, than adding something new?

Progressions:

1. Reduce the time given to read and call the system before delivery.
2. Add a genuine mixed system as the default rather than the exception.
3. Increase the bonus value for a goal scored directly from a correctly-read option.

Regressions:

1. Allow more time to read and call the system before delivery.
2. Reduce the frequency of set-piece restarts if the group needs more open play.
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 call the wrong option under the added time pressure	The reading skill is still new and hasn't yet transferred to a fast, game-realistic context	An option called that doesn't match the announced defending system	Let it flow, then a natural stoppage	Question: "what did the call tell us, and did we listen to it?"	Resume
The game loses its competitive energy under the added structure	Too much stoppage or instruction breaking the game's natural rhythm	Flat, low-energy play between restarts	Stop	Simplify temporarily — reduce the frequency of announced systems	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:

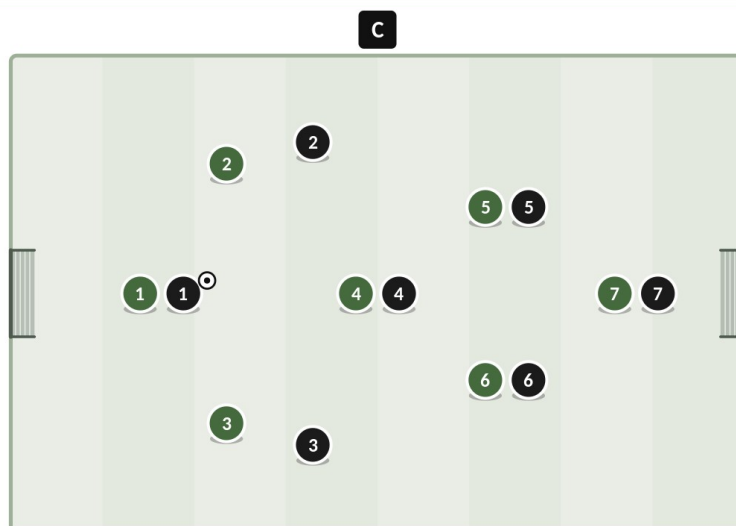
- The team reads and selects the correct option accurately even under game-realistic time pressure.

- Confirmed personnel execute their roles fluently and without hesitation.
- Players finish the session animated, confident, and positive.

Coach's eye: this is a confidence-building close to the week — resist over-coaching it; let the week's earlier detailed work do its job and allow the group to enjoy seeing it function under pressure.

H32.4 THE MAXIMISED SET — Confidence Game

34 x 22 m • 7v7 • every restart is a set piece, opposition marking system announced just before delivery • 17 minutes



● Team A ● Team B ● Ball

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AI image-generation prompt (tactical diagram): "Top-down 2D vector football coaching diagram, clean white background, UEFA coaching-manual style. A 34x22 metre pitch with a full-size goal at each end. Seven players in dark green bibs numbered 1–7 and seven players in black bibs numbered 1–7 spread across the pitch. White football near a green player. Title: 'THE MAXIMISED SET — Confidence Game'. Subtitle: '34 x 22 m • 7v7 • every restart is a set piece, opposition marking system announced just before delivery • 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 paused for a corner routine, players moving confidently and quickly into confirmed positions as the coach calls out the defending system, both full-size goals visible, energetic and positive atmosphere.

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, paused for a corner-kick routine. Players in dark green bibs moving confidently and quickly into position as a coach on the touchline calls out instructions. Warm early-evening light, realistic grass pitch and long shadows, amateur adult players of varied build showing visible energy and enjoyment. 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: "Say your own confirmed set-piece role and your contingency role, out loud, in one sentence each."

Match-Day Objectives

Three team objectives:

Manage the space in behind the defensive line effectively, regardless of how quickly Saturday's opponent tries to break.

Read the opponent's specific set-piece defending system and select the correct pre-rehearsed option every time.

Execute every set-piece role exactly as confirmed this week, with rest defence set behind every restart without exception.

Three unit objectives:

Back line and goalkeeper: manage the line's height collectively, and organise corner and free-kick defending with rest defence.

Midfield unit: provide immediate cover for a beaten defender, and fill their confirmed set-piece roles without hesitation.

Front players: track back to help stop a fast break in its first few seconds, and execute their confirmed attacking set-piece runs precisely.

Individual role reminders:

- Know your confirmed set-piece role and your contingency role — both are now settled, not to be renegotiated on the day.
- React immediately and collectively the instant possession is lost.
- Read the picture — both in open play and at restarts — before committing to a response.

Measurable performance indicators:

- Number of clean runs conceded in behind the defensive line.
- Number of counter-attacks stopped within the first few seconds of a turnover.
- Accuracy of set-piece system reads and correct option selection.
- Consistency of rest-defence shape at every restart.

Formation Translation — Applying This Across Different Structures

Defending the space in behind and set-piece maximisation

STRUCTURE	HOW DEFENDING THE SPACE IN BEHIND TYPICALLY EXPRESSES ITSELF	HOW SET-PIECE MAXIMISATION TYPICALLY EXPRESSES ITSELF	WHAT STAYS THE SAME	KEY RISK
4-3-3	Through the back four's collective line and the holding midfielder's screening cover	Through the same confirmed personnel and reading process regardless of the team's own shape on the day	The underlying line-management and system-reading process	Individual defenders managing the line on their own instinct rather than the collective read
3-4-3	Through the back three's cover and the wing-backs' recovery pace	Through the same confirmed personnel and reading process	The same underlying process	The same risk — a back three's extra body doesn't replace the need for a genuinely collective decision

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.