

# CONQUERING PRE-SEASON

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Pre-season isn't about doing more. It's about starting right.  
Before the tactics, before the drills, there's a chance to set the tone. To build trust.  
To create clarity. This cheatsheet isn't a plan, it's a compass.  
Use it to lead with intention when everything else feels loud.

## DEFINE YOUR COACHING PRIORITIES EARLY

Pre-season gives you a rare window to shape what matters.

So don't chase everything. Instead, choose the 2-3 behaviours you want visible every week, even in week 10.

That's what success looks like.

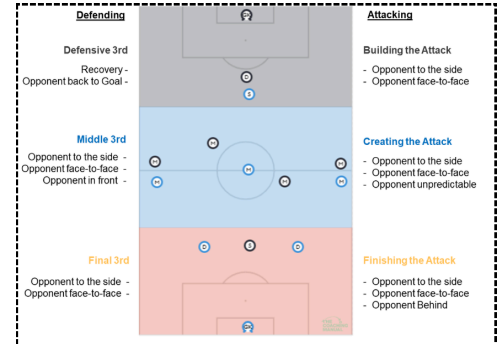
Week	Core Focus	Session Topic
1	In Possession	Creating and Finding the Free Player
2	Out of Possession	Team Shape and Block Compactness
3	Transition to Attack	Breaking Forward from Regain Zones
4	Transition to Defend	Immediate Reaction and Recovery Rums
5	In Possession	Breaking Lines through Positional Play
6	Out of Possession	High Press and Pressing Triggers
7	Transition to Attack	Stretching the Game After Regain
8	Transition to Defend	Reset Defence and Counter Press Shape
9	Patterns of Play	Wide Overloads and Third-Man Runs
10	Match-Related	Managing Game Tempo and Final Third Play
11	In Possession	Circulation to Move the Opponent
12	Out of Possession	Shifting Across as a Unit (Mid/Low Block)
13	Transition to Attack	Playing Forward with Speed and Support
14	Transition to Defend	Protecting the Middle After Loss
15	Patterns of Play	Switching Play and Inside-Channel Combinations
16	Match-Related	Functional Play: Build Up Under Pressure

## TEACH IN MOMENTS, NOT LECTURES

Introduce your key ideas through shared language and models.

For example:  
**Moment – Slice – Situation**

Keep it live.  
Reference it during activities, not before them.



## USE TIME AS A TEACHING TOOL

Pre-season doesn't reward the coach who shouts the most or fills every minute. It rewards the one who creates space for learning.

Cut the fluff. Keep sessions shorter, tighter, and more focused. Players need rhythm, repetition, and recall; not fatigue disguised as intensity.

Your job isn't to cover everything.

It's to make sure the important things get uncovered.

## LOAD PLAYERS GRADUALLY, NOT EVENLY

Not every player walks into pre-season ready for sprint work or 1v1 duels.

And if you treat them all the same, you'll lose the ones who need you most.

Use the first week to observe.

Tier intensity based on what you see. Let them earn their load through consistent habits, not a stopwatch.

Fitness isn't built in one session. But trust—and understanding—can be.

## START SHAPING TEAM IDENTITY EARLY

Forget formations for now. The real blueprint is behaviour.

What players do when the ball is won or lost tells you everything.

So ask often, in the moment:

- What does good pressing look like?
- Did we recover as a unit?
- Who showed leadership?

Team identity isn't told.

It's shown, in hundreds of small

## EXPECT CHAOS AND PLAN FOR FLEXIBILITY

Pre-season doesn't reward the most detailed planner. It rewards the coach who can pivot without losing purpose.

- New players will arrive.
- Trialists will come and go.
- Sessions will break halfway through.

The best coaches adapt while keeping the core message intact.

## BUILD YOUR COMMUNICATION RHYTHM

The players don't need more words. They need better timing.

Adopt a repeatable rhythm, for example:

Brief → Observe → Remind.

Say less, but say it often, and always link it to your shared language.

## CREATE SMALL WINS PLAYERS CAN FEEL

If they leave training unsure what they got better at, you missed the moment.

Use check-ins, nudges, and praise that sticks. Reinforce progress out loud.

Build momentum through certainty, not just sweat.

Confidence compounds. So does clarity.

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