

Team Identity Observation Checklist

Spotting the signs that your players see themselves as a team

Team	
Date	
Observer	
Training or match?	
Opposition / context	

What this is for

This checklist helps you see how strong your team's sense of identity is – how much they play and behave like a team that belongs together, rather than a group of individuals. It comes in two parts. Layer 1 is the signs that the players see themselves as “us”. Layer 2 is what a team with that strong sense of “us” tends to do. Keeping them apart lets you see both the identity and what comes from it.

How to use it

- Watch one full session or match. Rate the pattern you see again and again – not a one-off moment.
- For each line, read the two descriptions (weak on the left, strong on the right) and circle the rating that fits best.
- If something never came up – e.g. the team never faced a setback – circle N/O. Don't guess.
- If you can, get a second person to rate the same session on their own, so you can see how closely you agree.

The ratings

Score	Means	What it looks like
1	Rarely	The weak side is what you mostly saw.
2	Now and then	The strong side showed up, but inconsistently.
3	Often	Most players, most of the time.
4	All the time	The strong side was there throughout, including under pressure.
N/O	Didn't come up	No chance to see it this session. Leave it out of the score.

Working out the score

- For each group of lines, take the average of the ones you scored (leave out any N/O).
- Write down a score for Layer 1 (identity) and Layer 2 (what they do) separately. Don't add it all into one number – they tell you different things, and a strong score on one shouldn't hide a weak score on the other.
- Read Layer 2 next to Layer 1. Lots of the right behaviour but weak signs of identity usually mean it's coming from coaching or talent rather than a real sense of “us”.

Layer 1 – Signs the team sees itself as “us”

These are the signs that the players see themselves as a team that belongs together, rather than a group of individuals.

Talking as a team							
1. “We” not “I”	Players talk about themselves, not the team – “I”, “my job”, “what the coach wants”.	①	②	③	④	Players say “we”, “us” and “our” without thinking – e.g. “we conceded that”, “that’s on us”.	N/O

Showing they belong							
2. Wearing the badge with pride	Players don’t care about the team’s kit or badge – worn carelessly, treated like any old sports gear.	①	②	③	④	Players wear the team’s kit and badge properly and with pride, without being told.	N/O
3. Doing the team’s rituals	Huddles, warm-ups or pre-match routines don’t happen, fall apart, or only happen when the coach makes them.	①	②	③	④	Players run their own team rituals together – e.g. a huddle, a chant, a set handshake – without being told.	N/O

Us and them							
4. Acting as one unit	No sense of “us” against the opposition – players deal with opponents one by one, as individuals.	①	②	③	④	The team acts as one unit – e.g. lining up together, fronting up to challenges as a group.	N/O
5. Backing each other against outsiders	When a teammate gets it from an opponent or the ref, the others stay out of it.	①	②	③	④	When a teammate is targeted from outside the team, others move in to support them and show a united front.	N/O

Pride in belonging							
6. Proud even when losing	Little sign players are proud to be part of this team – it feels like just turning up.	①	②	③	④	Players show pride in being part of the team even when they’re losing, in how they carry themselves.	N/O

Sticking together							
7. Standing by a struggling teammate	When a player is struggling or has made a mistake, teammates pull away or leave them to it.	①	②	③	④	When a player is struggling or has made a mistake, teammates go to them and back them up.	N/O

Layer 2 – What a strong-identity team does

These are the behaviours a team with a strong sense of “us” tends to show. Read them alongside Layer 1: if a team does all of this but the signs of identity are weak, it’s probably coming from good coaching or talent rather than a real sense of “us”.

Working for the team							
8. Doing the unseen work	Players save themselves – they avoid the hard graft that brings them nothing personally.	①	②	③	④	Players do the hard, unseen work for the team – e.g. the extra run, covering ground, the tackle no one notices.	N/O

Bringing everyone in							
9. Including everyone	Subs, quieter or fringe players are left on the outside of the group.	①	②	③	④	Subs and quieter players are brought in – talked to, included, part of the group.	N/O
10. Encouraging each other	Little encouragement between players – heads down, quiet, or only the coach’s voice.	①	②	③	④	Players lift each other during play – e.g. a word after a mistake, calling each other on.	N/O

Staying together under pressure							
11. Reconnecting after a setback	After a setback – a goal conceded, a bad call – players drop their heads and pull apart.	①	②	③	④	After a setback, players reconnect quickly and get back to it together, rather than falling apart.	N/O

Sharing the lead							
12. More than one or two leaders	Direction comes from only one or two players, or only the coach.	①	②	③	④	Different players step up and take charge across the game, not just the captain.	N/O

Holding the line together							
13. Holding each other to standards	When standards slip, players let it go and say nothing.	①	②	③	④	Players hold each other to the team’s standards themselves, without waiting for the coach.	N/O

Your scores

Put the average (1–4) of the lines you scored next to each group, then the two layer averages.

Group	Lines scored	Average (1–4)
Talking as a team	1	
Showing they belong	2	
Us and them	2	
Pride in belonging	1	
Sticking together	1	
LAYER 1 – Identity (average of lines scored)		
Working for the team	1	
Bringing everyone in	2	
Staying together under pressure	1	
Sharing the lead	1	
Holding the line together	1	
LAYER 2 – What they do (average of lines scored)		

One thing to keep in mind

This is a structured way of watching, not a finished test. Before you use the scores to compare teams or make decisions, it's worth trying it out with a second observer to check you're both seeing the same things.

Observation notes