

**QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
2004 MEN'S 18 EUROPEAN HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP
BELGRADE / SERBIA & MONTENEGRO
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ZORAN VALDEVIT,
Teacher of Physical Education,
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Sports and Physical
Education in Belgrade.

ZORAN IVIĆ,
Serbia and Montenegro Women's National Team,
Coach.

VOJISLAV MALEŠEVIĆ,
Coach.



1. INTRODUCTION

The seventh Men's Cadet European Handball Championship, for the first time hosted 16 national teams. The event took place in Belgrade from the 23rd of July to the 1st August 2004.

After many years, once again Belgrade was given the chance to organize such a great competition. Upon the conclusion of the event, the chances are that Belgrade has completely fulfilled expectations, and the hopes are that Belgrade could host a Senior European Championship soon.

The opening of the Championship, and awarding ceremonies for the best individuals and best team were embellished with light effects. The EHF officials and the high officials of Serbia and Montenegro presented prizes for best individuals, medals for each player and a cup for each of the three top ranked national teams.

All national teams, referees, and officials were accommodated in three hotels.

The group tournament was carried out in two arenas (Pionir and Banjica), and the final matches took place in the Pionir arena. The national television station broadcast the final match. Over 6000 spectators cheered in the final match in the Pionir arena, and we have every right to say they were Serbia and Montenegro national team's eight players were on their way to winning the gold medal.

During the Championship, a party was organized on the raft-club called "Blay Watch", so the participants had the chance to get to know each other a little better.

2. NATIONAL TEAMS STANDINGS AND THE BEST INDIVIDUALS

2.1. THE STANDINGS OF ALL NATIONAL TEAMS IN THE 2004 MEN'S 18 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

The final standing of all national teams is following:

1. Serbia and Montenegro	5. Germany	9. France	13. Switzerland
2. Croatia	6. Slovakia	10. Hungary	14. Estonia
3. Denmark	7. Sweden	11. Russia	15. Romania
4. Slovenia	8. Belarus	12. Iceland	16. Bulgaria

2.2. THE BEST INDIVIDUALS OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP

As in all great competitions, the best individuals in this Championship were selected:

- The top scorer was the left wing from the German national team, UWE GENSHEIMER, who scored 58 goals in seven matches.
- The best goalkeeper was SOREN PEDERSEN from the Danish national team.
- The best player was NEJC POKLAR, centre back from the Slovenian national team.

2.3. ALL STAR TEAM PLAYERS

Players who were selected for the all-star team are:

Goalkeeper:	SOREN PEDERSEN (Denmark)
Left wing:	DOBRIVOJE MARKOVIĆ (Serbia and Montenegro)
Left back:	ŽARKO ŠEŠUM (Serbia and Montenegro)
Centre back:	NEJC POKLAR (Slovenia)
Right back:	JOHAN JACOBSSON (Sweden)
Right wing:	ČUPIĆ IVAN (Croatia)
Pivot:	ANDREJ PETRO (Slovakia)

The Fair-Play trophy went to the national team of Slovakia.

3. THE CHAMPIONSHIP STATISTICS

The participants of this Championship were born in 1984 or later (Table 1).

The average age of the players in every team ranges from 17.6 (Estonian national team) to 18.2 (national team of Russia). The national team of Slovenia have not submitted records of birth dates for their players. Each team consisted of at least two players who were born in 1987, while only the national teams of Slovenia, Iceland, Switzerland, Estonia and Bulgaria had players born in 1988.

Team	Total no. of players	Born			Average Age
		1986	1987	1988 and younger	
SCG	16	14	2	0	18,1
CRO	16	12	4	0	18,1
DEN	16	11	5	0	17,8
SLO	16	9	6	1	no birth dates
GER	16	14	2	0	18
SVK	16	13	3	0	18
SWE	16	12	4	0	18
BLR	15	13	2	0	18,1
FRA	16	13	3	0	18,1
HUN	16	11	5	0	17,9
RUS	15	13	2	0	18,2
ISL	16	11	4	1	17,8
SUI	16	11	4	1	17,8
EST	15	9	4	2	17,6
ROM	16	13	3	0	18
BUL	16	12	3	1	17,9

Table 1 – Age of players

Team	Total no. of players	International matches			
		0 - 10	11 - 20	21 - 30	31>
SCG	16	15	1	0	0
CRO	16	16	0	0	0
DEN	16	6	9	1	0
SLO	16	2	10	4	0
GER	16	3	13	0	0
SVK	16	0	0	4	12
SWE	16	16	0	0	0
BLR	15	6	9	0	0
FRA	16	3	5	8	0
HUN	16	9	7	0	0
RUS	15	13	2	0	0
ISL	16	14	2	0	0
SUI	16	4	12	0	0
EST	15	5	10	0	0
ROM	16	6	8	2	0
BUL	16	0	13	3	0

Table 2 – International matches

The majority of players had up to 20 performances in international matches. A few players had between 21 to 30 international appearances. They came from the national teams of Denmark (1), Slovenia (4), France (8), Rumania (2), and Bulgaria (3). The national team of Slovakia had the greatest number of players with international experience (Table 2). A very interesting fact is that the players of Swedish national team, as well as the players from the two top ranked teams in this Championship (Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia), had the least international performances, leading to a conclusion that “great” international experience doesn’t necessarily have a considerable influence on the final result.

Team	Players from domestic clubs	Players from foreign clubs	Participating Clubs	Max. No. of players from one club	Club
SCG	16	0	9	4	Sintelon
CRO	16	0	9	4	Metković
DEN	16	0	8	5	GOG
SLO	16	0	12	2	Celje Pivovarna Laško
GER	16	0	14	3	HBW Balingen-Weilstetten
SVK	16	0	7	6	ŠKP Bratislava
SWE	16	0	10	4	Skanela IF
BLR	15	0	2	11	SKA Minsk BLR
FRA	16	0	10	4	SC Selestat
HUN	16	0	8	4	Dunaferr SE
RUS	15	0	7	3	Lukoil-Dinamo
ISL	16	0	8	6	Fram
SUI	16	0	13	4	BSV Muri Bern
EST	15	0	4	7	HC POLVA
ROM	16	0	11	2	CSS Calarasi
BUL	16	0	10	5	NSA Sofia

Table 3 – National team members

All players participating in this Cadet European Championship play for domestic sports clubs, which is quite usual considering their ages (Table 3).

Players from the national team of Germany came from 14 different sports clubs, while the players from Belarus only came from two different national clubs, which is to their advantage because players knew one another a little better as they all play together within these clubs.

The three first ranked national teams were made up of players from eight, and at most nine different clubs.

Table 4 shows the usual player positions. However, frequent position switches in attack formations make the players learn how to play in all positions.

In the Championship, we again saw players who played only in defence positions, or in attack positions, which is limiting, considering the age of players, and providing very moderate possibilities for their further progress and self-expression.

All national teams had a left-handed player. They all played in either the right wing or right back positions, or both. In our opinion, it would be quite refreshing to see a left-handed player in the centre back position.

Team	Play position							Hand	
	GK	LW	RW	P	LB	CB	RB	R	L
SCG	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	12	4
CRO	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	13	3
DEN	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	12	4
SLO	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	13	3
GER	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	12	4
SVK	3	2	2	3	1	3	2	12	4
SWE	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	13	3
BLR	2	2	3	2	3	1	2	10	5
FRA	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	11	5
HUN	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	12	4
RUS	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	11	4
ISL	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	12	4
SUI	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	12	4
EST	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	14	1
ROM	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	12	4
BUL	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	12	4

Table 4 – Team position

The average height of all teams participating in this Championship (Table 5) ranged from 186.1 cm (Iceland) to 191.1 cm (Romania). The eight top ranked teams had the average height of 187 cm (Slovenia) to 190.6 cm (Serbia and Montenegro).

As for the players' weight, six out of nine top ranked teams are the heaviest in average in this European Championship, with weights from 85.1 kg (France) to 88.2 kg (Sweden). "Lighter" teams were Germany (80.9 kg), Slovenia (84.3 kg), and Croatia (84.7 kg) from the nine top ranked teams in this European Championship.

The average height of all participants in this European Championship was 188.2 cm, and their average weight was 83.4 kg.

Team	Height						Body weight		
	<185	185 - 190	191 - 195	196 - 200	201 >	Average	Min	Max	Average
SCG	2	6	5	3	0	190,6	75	102	87,9
CRO	4	3	6	3	0	188,7	70	97	84,7
DEN	5	7	4	0	0	187,7	74	110	86,5
SLO	7	6	1	2	0	187	75	98	84,3
GER	4	8	2	1	1	187,7	66	90	80,9
SVK	5	4	4	3	0	189,1	71	110	85,4
SWE	7	1	5	3	0	187,9	74	109	88,2
BLR	4	4	0	7	0	190,4	78	95	86,1
FRA	5	4	3	2	2	189,8	70	103	85,1
HUN	4	8	2	2	0	187,4	63	103	82,6
RUS	3	5	4	2	1	190	74	98	82,5
ISL	6	6	2	2	0	186,1	64	101	79,9
SUI	8	4	2	2	0	186,6	65	95	79,6
EST	6	5	2	2	0	186,7	68	103	79,3
ROM	1	6	8	1	0	191,1	74	92	83,7
BUL	7	6	3	0	0	184,1	65	86	76,9
Average						188,2			83,4

Table 5 – Height and weight

Comparing the days spent in training with the outcome of the Championship, the national team of Serbia and Montenegro had the longest final preparations of the eight top ranked teams. Most national teams have trained throughout the entire year for this event, with breaks. Continuous work combined with the quality players makes the winning combination for good results.

EXAMPLE: The Bulgarian national team, who finished last in this Championship, spent 22 days in intense preparation, and after four days of rest, they continued to train for another 17 days, before the Championship started. The poor result of this team can be ascribed to poor player selection.

Team	Number of days of preparation	Team	Number of days of preparation
SCG	28	FRA	7
CRO	18	HUN	15
DEN	7	RUS	28
SLO	11	ISL	30
GER	11	SUI	13
SVK	15	EST	23
SWE	4	ROM	21
BLR	14	BUL	39

Table 6 – Number of days spent in preparation

Table 7 shows the positions and the attack formations used to finalize actions.

The national team of Belarus took the most 6 m shots (113), but the best percentage in finalizing these shots goes to Hungarian national team (71.4%).

The Swedish national team had most attempts at the goal from wing positions (68), but the national team of Serbia and Montenegro had the best realization (68.1 %). A very interesting fact is that the French national team made only 13 attempts at the goal from the wing positions during all seven matches played in the European Championship. Maybe the reasons for their bad standing can be found in the Table 8.

The Estonian national team made the most shots from the backcourt positions (196), and the best percentage in finalizing these shots belongs to the national team of Russia (45, 5%).

The number of fast breaks made in this Championship ranged from 22 (Iceland's national team) to 62 (Germany's national team). The Hungarian national team had the best percentage of used fast breaks (87, 5%).

Team	No. of matches	Shots							Total
		6m	Wing	7m	9m	FB	BT	FTO	
SCG	7	57/89 64%	32/47 68,10%	21/26 80,80%	48/133 36,10%	40/48 83,30%	23/28 82,10%	0/0 0%	222/373 60%
CRO	7	50/75 66,70%	22/51 43,10%	10/19 52,60%	56/149 37,60%	29/35 82,90%	18/22 81,80%	0/0 0%	185/351 53%
DEN	7	50/83 60%	20/46 43,40%	16/20 80%	64/170 38%	32/42 76,20%	14/15 93,30%	0/1 0%	196/379 52%
SLO	7	71/108 65,70%	20/33 60,60%	22/30 73,30%	36/119 30,30%	39/50 78%	21/25 84%	0/0 0%	209/366 57%
GER	7	36/58 62,10%	26/47 55,30%	18/25 72%	57/150 38%	44/62 71%	21/28 75%	5/7 71,40%	207/381 54%
SVK	7	42/77 54,50%	29/53 54,70%	23/36 63,90%	51/149 34,20%	30/41 73,20%	7/9 77,80%	0/0 0%	182/366 50%
SWE	7	30/57 52,60%	28/68 41,20%	10/14 71,40%	57/151 37,70%	29/42 69%	11/15 73,30%	2/3 66,70%	168/354 48%
BLR	7	63/113 55,80%	16/39 41,00%	13/25 52%	47/146 32,20%	28/41 68,30%	11/14 78,60%	0/0 0%	180/384 47%
FRA	7	52/81 64,20%	7/13 53,80%	12/17 70,60%	62/183 33,90%	32/46 69,60%	10/12 83,30%	0/0 0%	176/356 49%
HUN	7	50/70 71,40%	23/45 51,10%	18/27 66,70%	59/155 38,10%	28/32 87,50%	18/23 78,30%	2/2 100%	198/356 56%
RUS	7	56/79 70,90%	19/41 46,30%	21/34 61,80%	56/123 45,50%	43/57 75,40%	25/29 86,20%	0/0 0%	220/363 61%
ISL	7	53/81 65,40%	30/51 58,80%	30/45 66,70%	52/119 43,70%	17/22 77,30%	18/30 60%	0/0 0%	200/349 57%
SUI	7	46/69 66,70%	23/46 50%	21/28 75%	41/130 31,50%	36/47 76,60%	32/37 86,50%	2/4 50%	201/361 56%
EST	7	32/51 62,70%	21/41 51,20%	15/26 57,70%	66/196 33,70%	24/34 70,60%	31/37 83,80%	0/0 0%	189/386 49%
ROM	7	67/108 62%	11/20 55%	22/31 71%	56/189 29,60%	32/46 69,60%	8/11 72,70%	0/0 0%	196/405 48%
BUL	7	34/58 58,60%	21/45 46,70%	15/17 88,20%	50/145 34,50%	41/53 77,40%	18/21 85,75	0/0 0%	180/341 53%

Table 7 – Cumulative statistics

Most individual actions (1:1) were made by players from the national teams of Switzerland and Estonia (37 each), but the best percentage of successfully finalized attacks after 1:1 actions has the national team of Denmark (93, 3%).

All teams used the „fast“ throw off at different times in matches.

An action which consisted of only one pass from the centre to a player (FTO), after which the same player ended the action with a shot to the goal, was played by only five national teams: Denmark, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden. The German national team made the most of these actions (7), but most successful were the Hungarians (100 %; 2/2).

Interesting information is that the Romanian national team, who ended this European Championship in 15th place, made most shots at the opponent's goal, but the national team of Serbia and Montenegro scored most goals (222). However, the Russian national team had the best percentage of successful attacks (61 %), even though they took 11th place in this Championship.

Team	Matches played	Wing shots	Wing shots per match	Wing goals	Wing goals %
SCG	7	47	6,7	32	14,40%
CRO	7	51	7,9	22	11,90%
DEN	7	46	6,6	20	10,20%
SLO	7	33	4,7	20	9,60%
GER	7	47	6,7	26	12,60%
SVK	7	53	7,6	29	15,90%
SWE	7	68	9,7	28	16,70%
BLR	7	39	5,6	16	8,90%
FRA	7	13	1,9	7	4%
HUN	7	45	6,4	23	11,60%
RUS	7	41	5,9	19	8,60%
ISL	7	51	7,3	30	15%
SUI	7	46	6,6	23	11,40%
EST	7	41	5,9	21	11,10%
ROM	7	20	2,9	11	5,60%
BUL	7	45	6,4	21	11,70%
Total		588		294	

Table 8 – Shots and goals from wing positions

Tables 9 and 10 show which positions, and how many times, were used in the play by all teams. They also show the efficiency percentage of all national teams from a certain position.

The offensive plays of most national teams were based on team play from back-court players and line players, so that's why most goals were scored from the 6 m line, as well as from the back-court positions.

Team	Total	The percentage of shots from different spaces and situations					
		6m	Wing	7m	9m	FB	BT
SCG	222/373	24%	13%	7%	36%	13%	7%
CRO	185/351	21%	15%	5%	42%	10%	7%
DEN	222/373	24%	13%	7%	36%	13%	7%
SLO	209/366	30%	9%	8%	33%	14%	6%
GER	207/381	15%	12%	7%	39%	16%	11%
SVK	182/366	21%	14%	10%	41%	11%	3%
SWE	168/354	16%	19%	4%	43%	12%	6%
BLR	180/384	29%	10%	7%	38%	11%	5%
FRA	176/356	23%	4%	5%	51%	13%	4%
HUN	198/356	20%	13%	8%	44%	9%	6%
RUS	220/363	22%	11%	9%	34%	16%	8%
ISL	200/349	23%	15%	13%	34%	6%	9%
SUI	201/361	19%	13%	8%	36%	13%	11%
EST	189/386	13%	11%	7%	51%	9%	9%
ROM	196/405	27%	5%	8%	47%	11%	2%
BUL	180/341	17%	13%	5%	43%	16%	6%
Average		21%	12%	7%	41%	12%	7%

Table 9 – Goal attempts from different positions

Team	Total	The percentage of goals from different spaces and situations					
		6m	Wing	7m	9m	FB	BT
SCG	222/373	26%	14%	9%	22%	18%	11%
CRO	185/351	27%	12%	5%	30%	16%	10%
DEN	222/373	26%	10%	8%	33%	16%	7%
SLO	209/366	34%	10%	11%	17%	19%	9%
GER	207/381	17%	13%	9%	28%	21%	12%
SVK	182/366	23%	16%	13%	28%	16%	4%
SWE	168/354	18%	17%	6%	34%	17%	8%
BLR	180/384	35%	9%	7%	26%	16%	7%
FRA	176/356	30%	4%	7%	35%	18%	6%
HUN	198/356	25%	12%	9%	30%	14%	10%
RUS	220/363	25%	9%	10%	25%	20%	11%
ISL	200/349	27%	15%	15%	26%	9%	8%
SUI	201/361	23%	11%	10%	20%	18%	18%
EST	189/386	17%	11%	8%	35%	13%	16%
ROM	196/405	34%	6%	11%	29%	16%	4%
BUL	180/341	19%	12%	8%	28%	23%	10%
Average		25%	11%	9%	28%	17%	10%

Table 10 – Goals scored from different positions

Team	Number of mistakes in each match from 1 to 7							Total errors	Average per match
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.		
SCG	13	10	12	16	10	12	13	86	12,3
CRO	9	12	15	5	11	6	21	79	11,3
DEN	12	12	9	11	13	10	10	77	11
SLO	12	17	3	16	9	25	12	94	13,4
GER	9	7	10	15	16	10	12	79	11,3
SVK	17	4	19	17	17	17	19	110	15,7
SWE	8	12	20	12	20	14	15	101	14,4
BLR	9	6	13	24	10	18	12	92	13,1
FRA	14	6	15	15	14	25	17	106	15,1
HUN	16	18	11	11	11	9	14	90	12,9
RUS	9	12	8	10	7	15	9	70	10
ISL	15	10	13	6	9	10	11	74	10,6
SUI	10	22	14	11	12	22	15	106	15,1
EST	16	9	21	20	14	18	14	112	16
ROM	14	13	19	18	15	9	20	108	15,4
BUL	12	13	22	11	17	19	18	112	16
Total								1496	13,4

Table 11 – Number of errors per match

The number of errors often decided the winner of the match (Table 11). Obvious examples were the semi finals and the final match of this Championship.

Errors ratio in the semi final matches:

Croatia - Denmark 6:10

Slovenia - Serbia and Montenegro 25:12

Errors ratio in the final match:

Serbia and Montenegro – Croatia 13:21

The total number of errors in this Championship was 1496, which is an average of 26.7 errors per match, e.g. 13.35 errors per team in one match.

Table 12 shows that the national team of Serbia and Montenegro had the greatest number of interruptions from rival attacks. This data alone is not sufficient to assume that the team that with lots of “interruptions” makes good standing. The national team of Switzerland (145 interruptions) who took 13th place speaks to this effect.

However, we believe that an engaging play in defence, with a great number of interruptions of opponent attacks, can in a big way contribute to a good result.

Team	Matches played	Number of interruptions	Number of interruptions per match
SCG	7	147	21
CRO	7	106	15,1
DEN	7	101	14,4
SLO	7	110	15,7
GER	7	129	18,4
SVK	7	114	16,3
SWE	7	127	18,1
BLR	7	92	13,1
FRA	7	83	11,9
HUN	7	104	14,9
RUS	7	128	18,3
ISL	7	105	15
SUI	7	145	20,7
EST	7	120	17,1
ROM	7	92	13,1
BUL	7	99	14,1

Table 12 – Attack interruptions

Team	Saves (total)	Total of shots	% EFF
SCG	82	304	27%
CRO	100	285	35%
DEN	96	292	33%
SLO	94	303	31%
GER	89	296	30%
SVK	111	293	38%
SWE	73	176	42%
BLR	100	255	39%
FRA	60	180	33%
HUN	60	209	29%
RUS	79	249	32%
ISL	75	244	31%
SUI	61	196	31%
EST	73	211	35%
ROM	119	315	38%
BUL	36	120	30%

Table 13 – Total goalkeeper saves

The majority of national teams participating in this Championship had two goalkeepers, while each of the six top ranked teams had three (Table 14). The goalkeepers tried hard to keep a good “alignment”, and to wait for the player to launch the ball before reacting to the shot. They tried, depending on the teams’ tactics, to return the ball to play as soon as possible, or to launch it to the centre after receiving a goal. This was especially the case in the plays of the national teams of Germany, Hungary, Denmark and Sweden.

An interesting fact (Table 13) is that the national team of Serbia and Montenegro – the new European Champion, had the lowest percentage of saved balls (27 %). At the same time, they are in second place when it comes to goal scoring attempts (304), followed by Romania (315).

Team	Name	Height	Weight	Date of Birth	Matches played	Saves %
SCG	1. Perišić	190	90	31.8.1986	7	26,50%
	12. Stambolija	190	95	27.2.1986	4	30,20%
	16. Abadžić	185	76	19.5.1987	4	24,40%
CRO	1. Šunjić	190	76	18.3.1987	7	35%
	12. Lončar	192	91	12.1.1986	7	40,50%
	16. Bumbak	192	83	22.8.1986	2	30,10%
DEN	1. Olsson	184	78	13.3.1987	1	34,30%
	12. Pedersen	187,5	104,5	20.8.1986	7	27,40%
	16. Dueholm	186	91	12.7.1986	7	0%
SLO	1. Skok	188	88	02.09.1986	7	25,40%
	12. Karpan	185	75	26.01.1986	4	34,60%
	16. Močivnik	185	78	08.05.1987	5	35,10%
GER	1. Muller	195	88	3.12.1986	6	29,40%
	12. Huhnstock	187	85	11.4.1986	3	27,10%
	16. Ritschel	193	90	12.4.1986	5	35,30%
SVK	1. Zechmeiste	193	86	13.4.1986	5	35%
	12. Barta	181	71	3.6.1986	4	42%
	16. Paul	195	80	22.4.1987	6	37,10%
SWE	1. Lucau	192	94	7.4.1987	7	43,80%
	12. Palicka	186	86	10.7.1986	6	36,40%
BLR	1. Sanko	197	90	9.3.1986	7	39,90%
	12. Kishov	190	82	23.9.1986	7	38,40%
FRA	1. Gerard	188	80	16.12.1986	7	33,10%
	12. Girardin	196	100	17.4.1986	7	33,90%
HUN	1. Kovacs	188	70	19.5.1986	7	35,90%
	12. Kiss	186	78	25.4.1987	7	21,70%
RUS	1. Bogdanov	197	90	26.3.1986	7	36,60%
	12. Khomarov	194	90	19.11.1986	7	24%
ISL	1. Jonsson	200	80	3.12.1986	7	31,50%
	16. Fridthjofsson	189	75	12.10.1987	7	28,60%
SUI	1. Heiniger	187	77	3.2.1987	7	29,90%
	12. Portman	197	83	9.4.1987	7	34,70%
EST	1. Paist	190	80	20.9.1986	7	39,80%
	16. Parve	193	82	13.5.1987	7	30,10%
ROM	1. Iordachita	192	84	14.7.1986	5	42,20%
	12. Cioltan	193	86	14.8.1986	7	25,50%
	16. Irimus	196	84	22.8.1987	2	35,70%
BUL	12. Arifov	183	80	15.12.1986	7	33,30%
	16. Ivanov	182	75	8.7.1986	7	27,50%

Table 14 – Goalkeepers

4. DEFENCE PLAY

During the Championship, there were three distinctive zone formations: 6:0, 5:1 and 3:2:1. These defence formations were played in situations when teams were complete or outnumbered (6:5). In situations with one excess player in defence, usual defence formation was 5+1. In situations with one player less in defence (5:6), the defence formation 5:0 was mostly played, only the national team of Serbia and Montenegro played 4:1 defence formation in this kind of a situation.

Defence tactics were adjusted depending on the play of the opponent.

Most teams made frequent changes from defence to offence. We have already noted that this is a considerable limiting factor for any further progress of players at this age. Most of these changes were made in the last few matches of the tournament, which could be consequent to the fatigue of players, but despite frequent changes, we have not noticed any considerable number of players strictly dedicated to defence tasks.

5. ATTACK PLAY

The attack play was characterized by frequent place changes. This forces the players to learn how to play in all positions. Running onto the line with a wing player or one of the back players to the second pivot position was often a case. In addition, there were many successful attacks after the 2:2 plays (back player and pivot).

Overactive play from wing players often jeopardized the play of the backcourt players.

When playing with one player in excess (6:5), the attack usually ended after a coordinated takeoff from the middle, although we often saw the attack played with two pivots who helped make an excess of players on one side of the court.

When playing the attack with one player less in attack formation (5:6), all teams played without pivots, which made the job easier for the defence. This way the attack loses depth, and therefore the possibility to make the balance in number on one side, through 2:2 plays.

EXAMPLE: the semi final match, between Serbia and Montenegro & Slovenia; goals scored by Serbia and Montenegro with one player less was – 1:11.

5.1. DISTINCTIVE PLAY OF CERTAIN NATIONAL TEAMS IN RESPONSE TO DIFFERENT ZONE DEFENCE FORMATIONS

Attack play of all teams was adjusted to the defence tactics of the opponent, so there were plenty of actions and “takeoffs” in response to a certain defence formation. In this part, we will show some actions that characterized offence play of certain national teams.

Key:

Left wing = LW
 Right wing = RW
 Pivot = P

Left back = LB
 Right back = RB
 Centre back = CB

-----▶ = ball movement
 —————▶ = player movement
 ⇨ = goal shot

Defence left back = DLB Left half = LH
 Defence right back = DRB Right half = RH
 Front centre = FC Centre half = CH

Figure 1: P is placed between 4 and 5. LB crosses with the LW, who passes the ball to CB and returns to its original position. CB passes the ball to RB who crosses with RW. RW passes the ball to CB and goes to position of second pivot between 2 and 3. CB passes to LB who plays 2:2. The national team of Serbia and Montenegro played this action from both sides.

Figure 2: P is placed between 4 and 5. CB crosses with LW. LW passes the ball to RB who broadly attacks the player in position 5, P blocks 4, and LW runs in beside the screen of the pivot, receives the ball from RB and shoots. The national team of Serbia and Montenegro played this action from both sides.

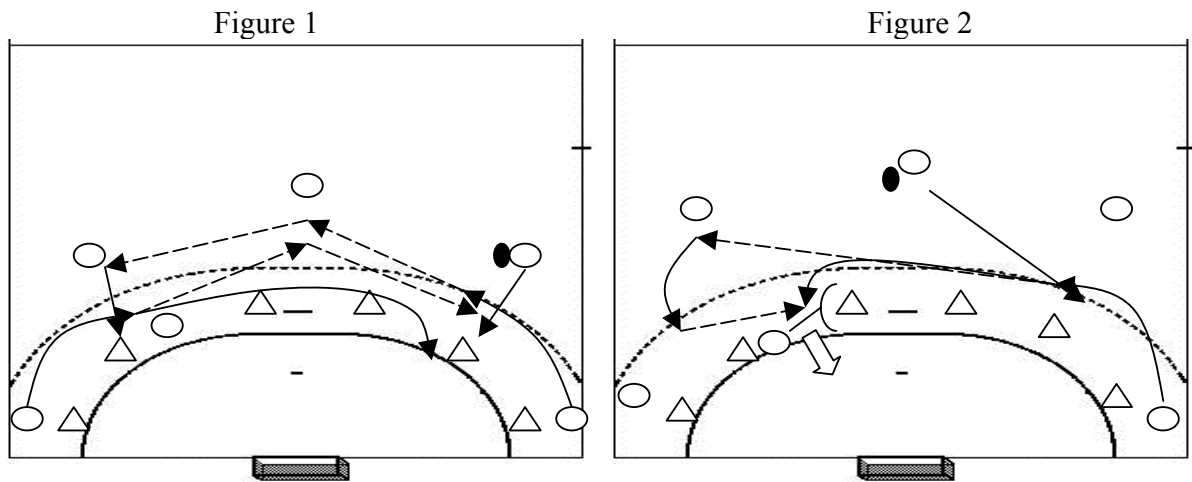


Figure 3: P is lined up with LB. CB crosses with RB and screens DLB (3:2:1 formation). RB crosses with LB, who takes a running start and plays the ball to RW who runs in next to the CB screen. The national team of Croatia played this action.

Figure 4: P is between 4 and 5. CB crosses with RB. RB crosses with LB and goes to his position. LB crosses with a diagonal running start with RW, in line with the defending 5. RW plays 2:2 with a pivot or passes the ball to RB who runs in between 1 and 2 or plays excess for LK. The national team of Croatia played this action.

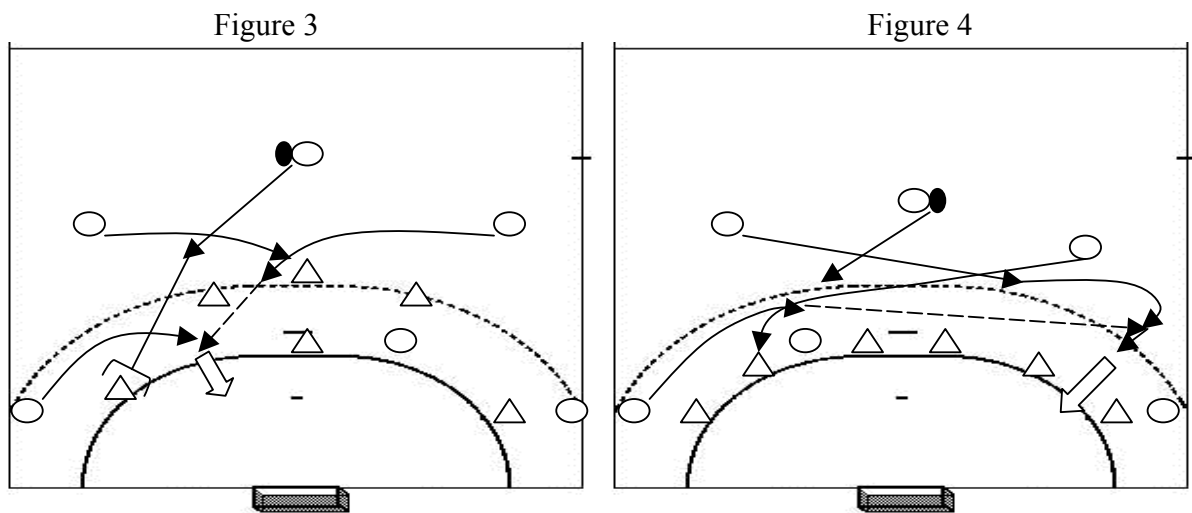


Figure 5: LB passes the ball to CB and goes in position of the second pivot between 4 and 5, which was the previous position of the pivot that has switched his position to take a stand between 2 and 3. CB spans to the position of LB, passes the ball to RB who diagonally runs in from the middle and takes a shot between 3 and 4. This was the action of the Danish national team.

Figure 6: P between 3 and 4. LB crosses with CB at the height of 2 and 3. CB transgresses LW at the height of 2 who passes between 2 and 3, or extends the ball to RB. This was the action of the Danish and German national teams, on both sides.

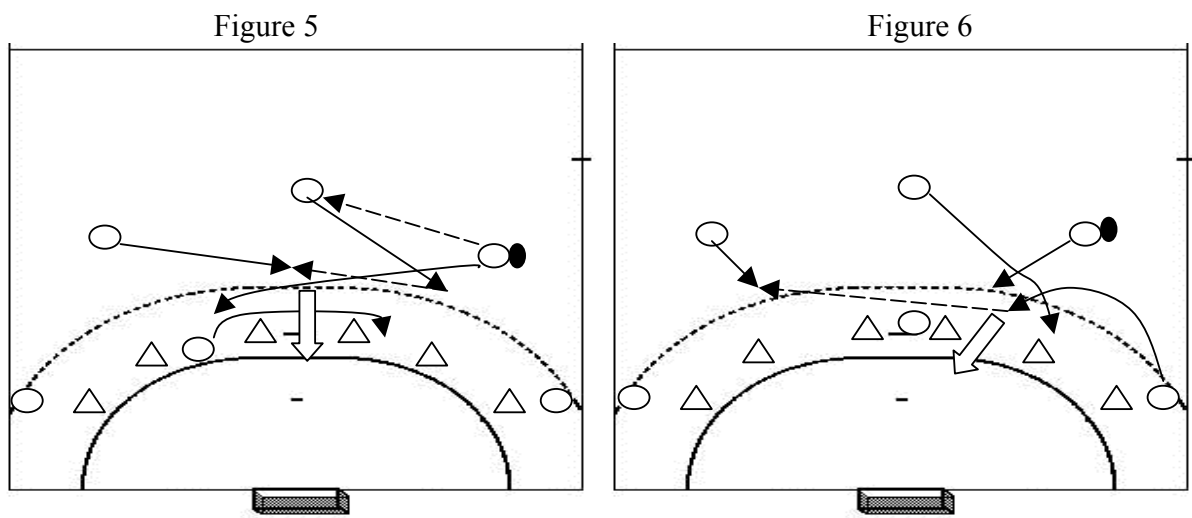


Figure 7: CB passes the ball to P who goes on the 9 m line. SB passes to P who is out at 9 m at the height of 3 in defence, and charges to the second pivot between 2 and 3. P passes to LB and goes to 6 m line, between 4 and 5. LB diagonally runs in and plays the ball for RB, who shoots or plays 2:2 with pivot. This was the action of the German national team.

Figure 8: P between 4 and 5. CB crosses with LB and goes in the second pivot position between 2 and 3. LB shoots between 3 and 4 or plays to the pivot, or to the RB who shoots between 4 and 5. The national team of Sweden played this action.

Figure 7

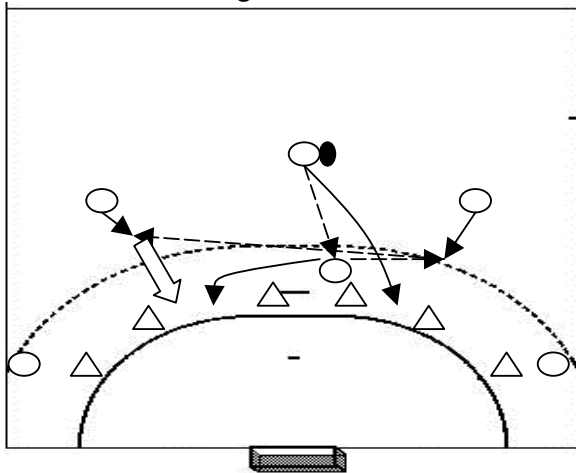


Figure 8

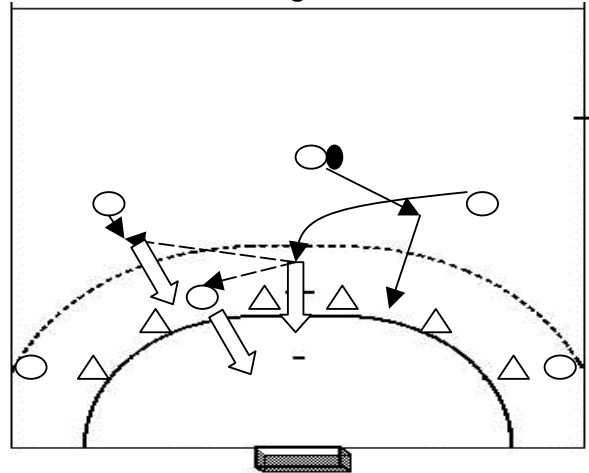


Figure 9: P is placed between RH and CH. LB passes to CB and goes in the second pivot position between LH and CH. CB passes to RB who makes a running start to the middle, and passes the ball to LW who runs in between RH and CH next to the screen of the pivot. The national team of Belarus played this action.

Figure 10: P is between 4 and 5. CB drags to the right and throws the ball to LB who runs in between 2 and 3 and returns the ball to CB, who came to the right back position while RB took the middle position. CB aims to shoot, or passes to pivot. This was the action of the national team of Iceland.

Figure 9

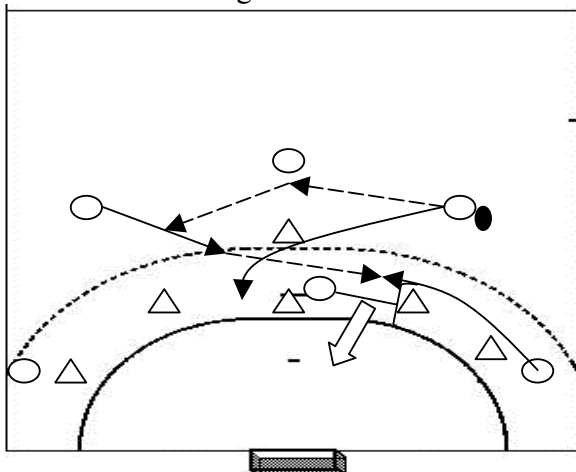
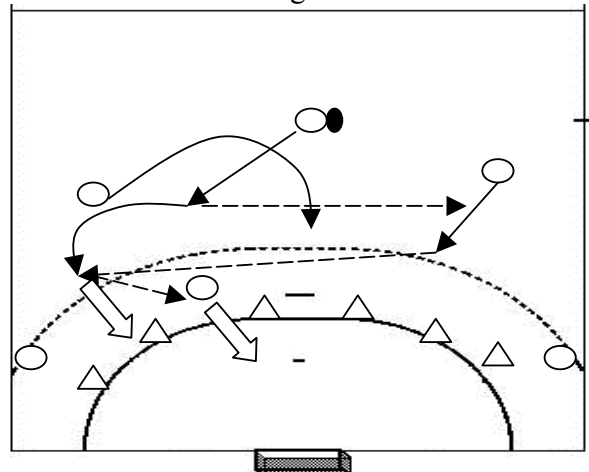


Figure 10



6. FEATURES OF NATIONAL TEAMS RANKED FROM 1st TO 4th PLACE

1. SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

The national team of Serbia and Montenegro played defence formations 6:0, 5:1 and 3:2:1, during the Championship. With one player less, they played 4:1 zone defence formation, and were the only team to play such a formation during the whole Championship. With one player less in the attack, they always played without a pivot.

Devoted and aggressive play in defence is a good characteristic of this team. Such play enabled them to score many easy points after having stolen the ball or after winning it over. Good technical preparation enabled them to score most of their goals after 1:1 or 2:2 plays.

2. CROATIA

Even though they played other defence formations from time to time, the basic defence formation of the Croatian national team was 6:0, in which the 3rd and the 4th player did not go deeper in the field at all, relying on their height to block the shots.

In attack formation, they relied mostly on shooting skills of their back players (Blažević), and individual actions and fast breaks from the right wing (Čupić). Nekić played successfully in the pivot and backcourt roles.

3. DENMARK

The national team of Denmark is a team that continuously achieves good results in cadet category. This was also confirmed in this Championship.

An excellent play in defence (6:0) enabled them for counter attacks, extended counter attacks, e.g. attacks in the first wave, which this team exploited abundantly.

The Danish team is technically highly skilled. They use side shots (ground shots) extensively, very often punishing any error in defence made by their opponents.

The best players of this national team are centre back (Jorgensen) and goalkeeper (Pedersen).

4. SLOVENIA

The national team of Slovenia was, so to speak, “the least lucky” team throughout the Championship, considering they were the only team in the semi finals who lost after two overtimes and also the only team who entered the final round of the tournament and did not win a medal.

This team is characterized by a great boldness. They play all defence formation equally well. They did not have any outstanding actions in the offence formation, but mostly relay on individual play (1:1) at the end of a team attack.

Best player of the team, the centre back (Poklar), played equally well in all backcourt positions. He was one of the few players throughout this Championship who was just as dangerous on both sides during an attack. The general impression is that he was rightfully proclaimed the top player.

7. CONCLUSION

After everything presented through out this Championship, the conclusion is as follows:

1. Tactical preparation of all teams was of a high level, which was obvious from the variety of solutions in defence and offence.
2. The number of players who are enabled to play in different positions increases, driven by the tactics itself.
3. The rule of a fast throw off was applied in abundance. Therefore, the play was faster and more dynamic.
4. Better-selected teams achieved good results, due to a long and continuous preparation for the tournament.
5. Youth and inexperience of players at this age shows in frequent oscillations in performance and results.