

Men's EHF European Handball Championship, Denmark 2014

Qualitative Analysis

Introduction

The EHF EURO was organized by the Danish Handball Federation. It took place in Denmark from January 12 through 26, 2014. The four groups were hosted by four towns:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| ▪ Group A: AUT, CZE, DEN, MKD | HERNING |
| ▪ Group B: ESP, HUN, ISL, NOR | AALBORG |
| ▪ Group C: FRA, POL, RUS, SRB | AARHUS |
| ▪ Group D: BLR, CRO, MNE, SWE | COPPENHAGEN |

After having played the three group matches, the teams that placed last exited the competition. The top three teams in each group at the end of the preliminary round qualified for the two main-round groups, composed of six teams each. The points won during the preliminary round against opponents which remained for the main round were kept and used to rank the teams in the main round. Each team played the remaining three matches against the opponents coming from the other group.

The first- and second-ranked teams went on to the semi-finals. The teams ranked third in each group after completion of the main round played a placement match to attribute places five and six in the EHF EURO ranking. The rest of the 16 teams were ranked 7-16 by their results achieved in the preliminary and main rounds of the competition.

The main round was played in Aarhus and Herning, while the semi-finals; the placement matches were played in Boxen Arena in Herning in front of 14.000 spectators. The tournament generated huge interest among fans. The "Boxen" sold out before the competition started, which in effect means that there were 14.000 spectators at the Arena for all match days. In Aalborg there were many fans from Iceland and Norway, and in Aarhus the Polish fans created a home-team atmosphere for their side. Copenhagen is close to the Swedish border, so it was easy for Sweden's supporters to visit the matches.

The 47 matches of the EURO were seen by over 316,000 spectators, which was a new record for the European Championships. The tournament organization was excellent, and a festive atmosphere prevailed in the arenas. Generally all the teams and their players behaved correctly and respectfully with one another. Fortunately, the weather did not cause any major problems for getting around.

The second edition of the European Master Coach and Licencing Course (Module 1.) was held in the first week of the tournament.

Participants and results

Table 1. *Table of results for the European Championships -- 16 teams in the final round*

Rank	Sweden 2002	Slovenia 2004	Switzerland 2006	Norway 2008	Austria 2010	Serbia 2012	Denmark 2014
1	SWE	GER	FRA	DEN	FRA	DEN	FRA
2	GER	SLO	ESP	CRO	CRO	SRB	DEN
3	DEN	DEN	DEN	FRA	ISL	CRO	ESP
4	ISL	CRO	CRO	GER	POL	ESP	CRO
5	RUS	RUS	GER	SWE	DEN	MKD	ISL
6	FRA	FRA	RUS	NOR	ESP	SLO	POL
7	ESP	SWE	ISL	POL	NOR	GER	SWE
8	CZE	SCG	SLO	HUN	CZE	HUN	HUN
9	POR	HUN	SCG	ESP	AUT	POL	RUS
10	YUG	ESP	POL	SLO	GER	ISL	MKD
11	UKR	CZE	NOR	ISL	SLO	FRA	AUT
12	SLO	SUI	UKR	MNE	RUS	SWE	BLR
13	SUI	ISL	HUN	RUS	SRB	NOR	SRB
14	ISR	POR	SUI	CZE	HUN	CZE	NOR
15	POL	UKR	POR	BLR	SWE	RUS	CZE
16	CRO	POL	SVK	SVK	UKR	SVK	MNE

- Comparing EURO 2014 to 2012, AUT, BLR and MNE qualified for the tournament, while GER, SLO and SVK did not.
- Since 2006 only DEN and FRA won the EURO, one alternating one with the other. If this trend holds then 2016 will be Denmark's year.
- Among the top four ranked teams we can often find CRO, DEN, ESP and FRA, especially in the most recent competitions. Only a few other teams have been able to break into this elite group.
- Except for MNE all teams earned match points.
- 2012's silver medallist SRB finished 13th only two years after their home-field success. While FRA, 11th last time, regained the throne.
- HUN finished 8th again, while SWE stepped moved from 12th to 7th.
- ISL finished 5 places better than last time.
- AUT's performance was also notable, having beaten CZE and HUN – winning the first and last matches - and having played many exciting and close matches.

Final Result

Table 2. Table of final results of the 2014 EURO

Rank	Team	MP	W	D	L	Average Result	Points
1	FRA	8	7	-	1	32:25	14
2	DEN	8	7	-	1	31:28	14
3	ESP	8	6	-	2	30:27	12
4	CRO	8	5	-	3	29:26	12
5	ISL	7	4	1	2	28:28	9
6	POL	7	3	-	4	27:26	6
7	SWE	6	4	-	2	27:26	8
8	HUN	6	1	2	3	26:28	4
9	RUS	6	2	-	4	28:30	4
10	MKD	6	1	1	4	23:27	3
11	AUT	6	2	-	4	26:26	4
12	BLR	6	1	-	5	27:32	2
13	SRB	3	1	-	2	24:26	2
14	NOR	3	-	1	1	26:28	1
15	CZE	3	-	1	2	24:29	1
16	MNE	3	-	-	3	22:28	0

- All goals per shots (EURO): 2,612 /4,453
- Average goals per shots (per match): 56 / 95 (In SRB 2012 53 goals were scored.) Since 2006 the average number of goals scored had been dropping. However this time around the average has increased by three goals.
- Most goals:

FRA-DEN	41:32	73
RUS-BLR	39:33	72
FRA-RUS	35:28	62

- Fewest scored goals:

SRB-POL	20:19	39
POL-RUS	24:22	46
MKD:CZE	24:24	48

Table 3. Table of goal difference in each match

	Preliminary R.		Main Round		Final matches		Aggregate	
	DEN 2014	SRB 2012	DEN 2014	SRB 2012	DEN 2014	SRB 2012	DEN 2014	SRB 2012
0	3	4	0	4	0	0	3	8
1-2	7	8	7	7	3	3	17	18
3-5	5	9	3	4	1	2	9	15
6-8	7	2	3	3	0	0	10	5
9-10	1	0	4	0	1	0	6	0
10 <	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1
Totals	24	24	18	18	5	5	47	47

This table shows that 20 of the 47 matches ended with a final goal difference of fewer than 2. Nearly half of all the matches were tight, exciting battles that went down to the wire.

However tournament began quite to the contrary: Seven of the first eight matches ended with a victory of five goals or more.

Moreover the number of the matches with a final goal difference greater than 5 goals increased over the last EURO. In SRB 2012 the number of such matches was six; in Den 2013, 18!

Table 4. *Table of players over 30 years old compared to the number of players playing abroad.*

MNE	CRO	SWE	BLR	ISL	HUN	ESP	CZE	MKD	DEN	AUT	RUS	SRB	FRA	POL	AV
3	6	7	6	9	9	7	8	10	9	8	6	8	8	9	7
13	13	13	10	16!	5	11	14	5	9	9	7	15	2	3	10

Players born in 1984 or earlier:

- MKD fields the most over-30 players – 10 – and four other countries (ISL, HUN, DEN, POL) nine.
- On the other hand, Montenegro only had 3 players over 30, while BLR, NOR, and RUS had six.

Players abroad:

- Most players playing in foreign leagues:
 - ISL (16!)
 - SRB (15)
 - CZE (14)
- Fewest players playing in foreign leagues:
 - FRA(2)
 - POL (3)
 - HUN (5)

Offence

Table 5. *Table of goals scored, average goals scored per match, and shot efficiency.*

	FRA	DEN	ESP	CRO	MNE	MKD	CZE	SRB
	Positive				Negative			
ALL GOALS	259	247	239	229	66	141	73	73
AV GOALS/MATCH	32	31	30	29	22	23	24	24
EFFICIENCY	67%	65%	62%	62%	52%	52%	54%	54%

- The tournament rankings matched, not coincidentally, the rankings by most goals scored and shot efficiency.
- Three of the least efficient teams – again no surprise – were eliminated after the preliminary round.
- It is inevitable to have a high number of scores going hand in hand with scoring efficiency.
- Fundamental team set-up:
 - The two wings are positioned at the corners. Normally they do not receive the ball in the build-up phase.
 - The two backs are very close to the side-lines, in order to spread the defence of the opponents, and to gain some free space for the backs and line players.
 - Simple solutions: piston movements; crosses; position changes, wing and back transition with and without the ball; and the combinations of these movements.
 - Line player position on the side of the defending players. Once a player receives the ball, it is nearly impossible to hold him without a violation.
 - The wings are waiting for the ball in the corners, many times finding themselves in a very promising shooting position.

Numerical superiority

407 als in 47 matches: average: 8.65 – 4.3 per teams. The efficiency per match was 61%.

Table 6. *Table of goals scored during man advantage*

	All	Av	%		All	Av	%
	Positive				Negative		
ESP	45	6	64		SRB	9	3
FRA	41	5	67		ISL	21	3
POL	35	5	52		HUN	21	3,5
MNE	16	5	73		SWE	19	3
MKD	29	5	67				
CRO	32	4	68				

Numerical inferiority

201 goals in 47 matches. The average is 4 goals per match, meaning 2 per team. The difference between the teams was not significant.

Fast Break

Table 7. *Table of goals scored in fast breaks*

	Goals	Av	Efficiency		Goals	AV	Efficiency
	Positive				Negative		
ESP	47	6	85		MKD	14	2,3
CRO	46	6	72		MNE	8	2,6
DEN	36	4,5	77		SRB	7	2,3
FRA	36	4,5	77		NOR	9	3

- Fast breaks were directly related to final tournament ranking. The four top teams in the competition were also among the best in fast-break goals and fast-break efficiency.
- Quick throw-off: Nearly all teams used it occasionally, with varying results.
- The lower-ranked teams scored fewer goals from fast break – about have as many as the first ranked.
- In 2012 the average number of fast break goals was 4.3 per match. This time it was 4, not a big difference.

Turnovers and Technical Fouls

- There were 1,022 losses of possession without an attempt on goal.
- This makes an average of 22 turnovers per match -- 11 per team.
- The most turnovers were committed by DEN, an average of 12 per match.
- The fewest turnovers were committed by CRO, 9 balls per match.
- The number of turnovers is more or less equal to the number of technical fouls committed.

Goals scored from back position

849 of all the goals (2612) goals were scored from back-shot -- approximately 30 % of all the goals. This meant an average of 18 goals per match, nine goals per team.

Table 8. *Table of goals scored from back position*

Goals				Av	Eff. (%)	Goals				Av	Eff. (%)
Positive						Negative					
FRA	93	11,5	56		MKD	35	6	37			
DEN	91	11	53		MNE	16	5	52			
ISL	75	11	48		BLR	43	7	33			
CRO	69	8,5	50		SRB	22	7	33			

Clearly for good results it is necessary to have effective back-shooting attempts. Moreover statistics shows that the lower-ranked teams scored fewer goals from distance.

The top goal scorers

Table 9. *Table of top goal scorers*

	Name	Nat.	Goal	Eff. (%)	Av	MP
1	CANELLAS	ESP	50	78	6,3	8
2	SIGURDSSON	ISL	44	73	6,3	7
3	HANSEN	DEN	39	65	4,9	8
4	LAZAROV	MKD	38	74	6,3	6
5	DUVNJAK	CRO	36	56	4,5	8
6	GUIGON	FRA	36	75	4,5	8
7	RUTENKA	BLR	34	55	5,6	6
8	HORVAT	CRO	33	73	4,1	8
9	KARABATIC	FRA	32	63	4,0	8
10	ABALO	FRA	31	72	3,9	8
11	LIJEWSKI	POL	31	57	4,4	7

- Note three players from FRA and two players from CRO.
- Five players from the all-star team made the list.

The top field goal scorer.

1	HANSEN	39
2	DUVNJAK	36
3	KARABATIC	32
4	ABALO	31
5	LIJEWSKI	31

- Top overall scorers

Table 10. *Table of top goal scorers*

		Goals + Assists	Assists	MP
1	HANSEN	88	49	8
2	CANELLAS	77	27	8
3	KARABATIC	76	44	8
4	DUVNJAK	73	37	8
5	LAZAROV	60	22	6
6	RUTENKA	52	18	6
7	NARCISSE	50	27	8
8	MAQUEDA	50	25	8
9	MIRKULOVSKI	47	26	6
10	SIGURDSSON	47	5	7

- The first four players were the most efficient attacking players of the ECHs.
- For assists, Hansen (49), Karabatic (44), Duvnjak (37) and Narcisse (27) stand out.
- The following table (11.) will show how involved these players were in the goals scored by their teams.

Table 11. *Goals and assists*

	All goals scored by the team	Goals scored by	Percentage of direct involvement
Karabatic - Narcisse	259	76+50=126	48,6 %
FRA			
M. Hansen	247	88	28%
DEN			
Duvnjak	229	73	31%
CRO			
Canellas - Maqueda	239	77+50=127	50%
ESP			

- The table shows very well that these players' performance fundamentally influenced their teams' good results.

Goal distribution by positions

All together 2,612 goals were scored in 47 matches.

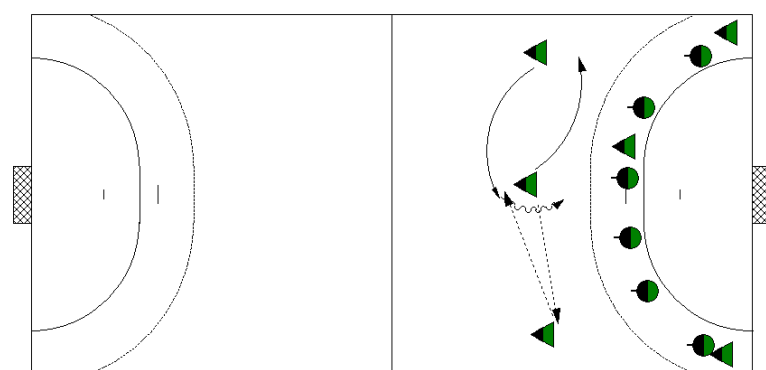
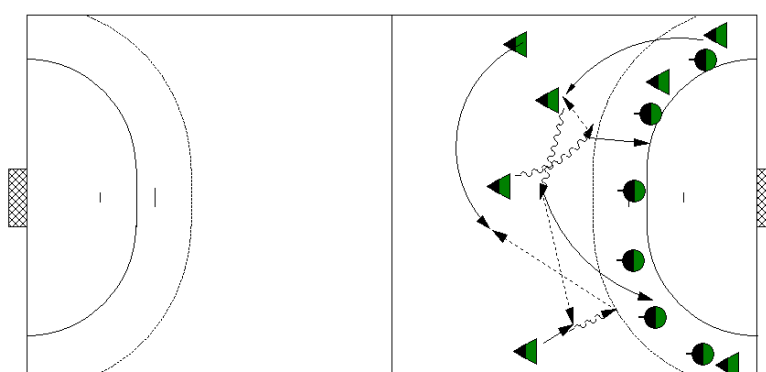
Table 12. *Table of goals scored by positions*

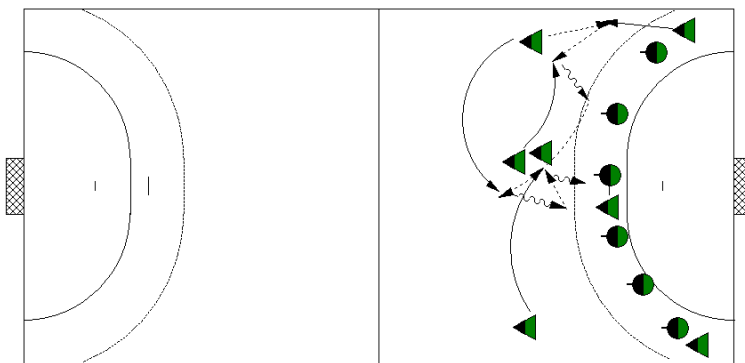
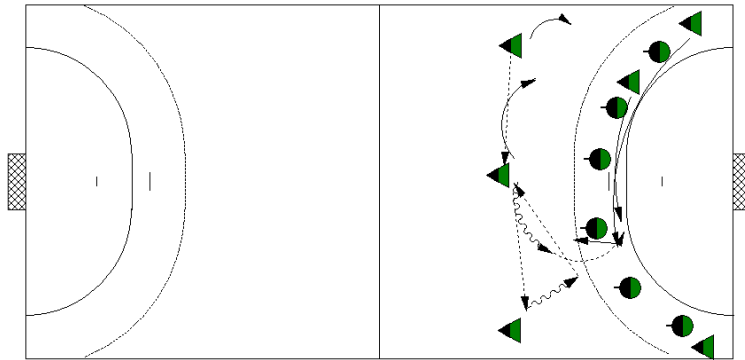
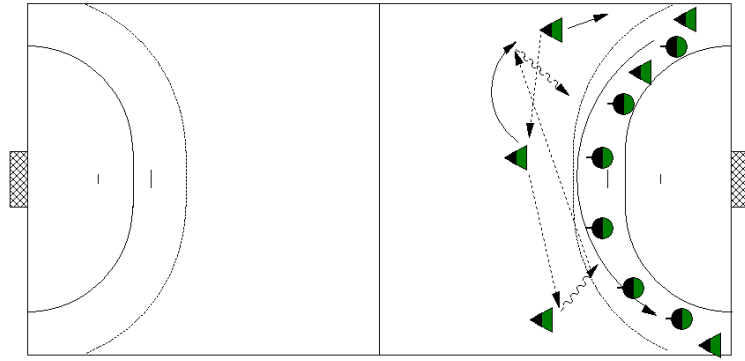
Position	Goals scored	Share of goals (%)	Av. goals/team/match
6m	395	15	4
WING	404	16	4,3
9M	849	33	9
FB	381	15	4
7M	303	12	3,2
BT	230	9	2,4
F.TH.O	50	2	0,5

- The most goals were scored from back position: 33 % of all goals.
- The share of the goals scored from wing, 6m and fast-break situations are nearly equal (15-16%).

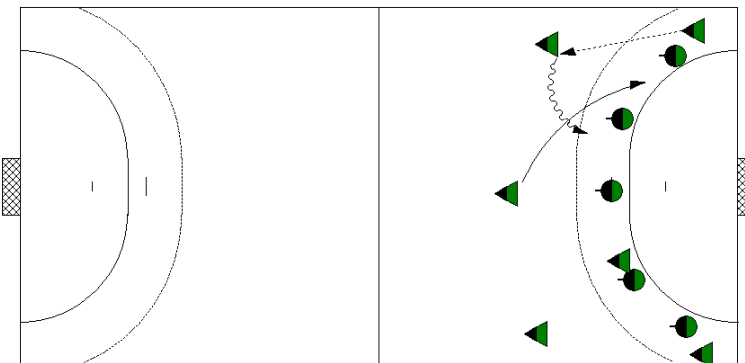
The sets used the most by all teams:

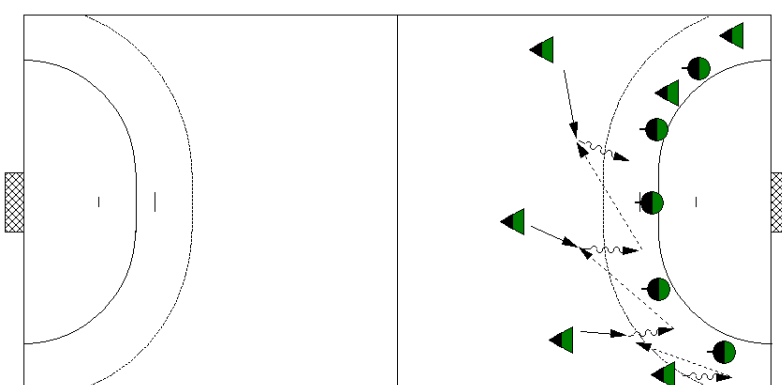
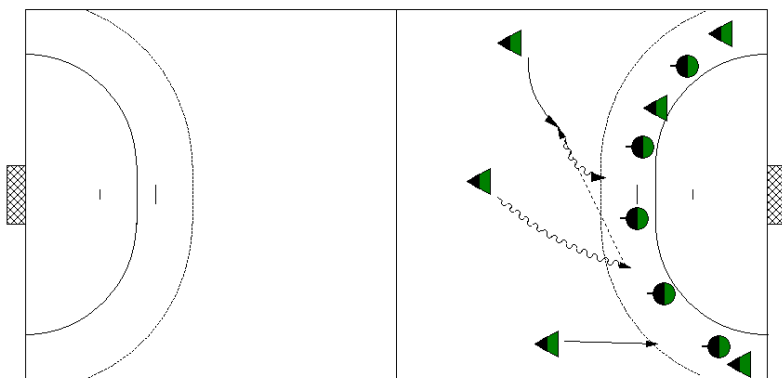
- 6 against 6



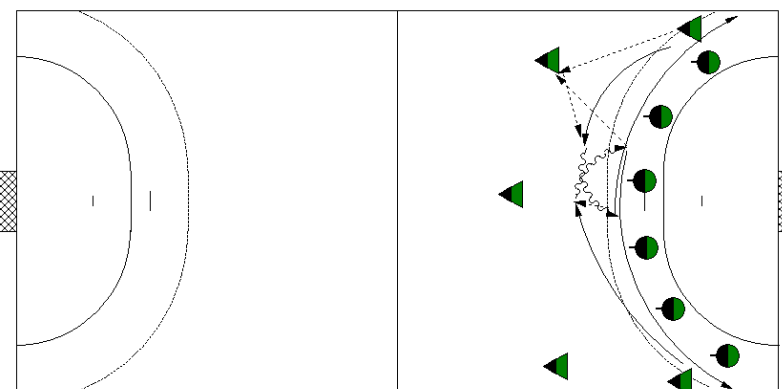


➤ 6 against 5





➤ 5 against 6



Defence

Systems of defence

- 15 teams started with the 6:0 defence; only BLR started with the 5:1 defence.
- 9 teams combined their defence during the matches. Most of the times the 6:0 defence was switched with 5+1 or 5:1
- On most teams the four middle defenders are very tall – around 2m (CRO, POL, ESP, FRA, CZE) – which justifies the 6:0 defence tactics.

- The defending players helped the goalkeepers with shot blocks, as well as covering one side of the goal.
- Substitutions between offense and defence: All teams had one to two substitutions.
- Occasionally - mostly during numerical superiority – the teams switched to 5+1 or 5:0, and rarely 4+2, man-marking two key players.
- On the other hand in inferiority they focused on the middle attackers, leaving a relatively bigger space for the wings.
- The teams spent an average of 8 minutes a man down, which matches the 2012 EURO.

Conceded goals

Table 13. *An average of 28 conceded goals per match.*

AV. GOALS			AV GOALS	
POSITIVE			NEGATIVE	
FRA	25		BLR	32
CRO	26		RUS	30
POL	26		CZE	29
SWE	26			
AUT	26			
SRB	26			

- Eight teams scored fewer goals than the average (28): FRA, CRO, POL, SWE, AUT, SRB, ESP, and MKD.
- Five teams scored exactly the average: DEN, ISL, HUN, NOR, and MNE.
- Three teams scored above the average: BLR, RUS, and CZE.
- The team that conceded fewer goals but also scored fewer was unable to finish in good position.
- The first four teams' goal differences were at least three goals on average.
- Below eighth place the goal difference was either zero or negative.

Steals and blocked shots.

- 275 steals in 47 matches. Av: 6 → 3 / team
- 273 blocked shots in 47 matches. Av: 6 → 3 / team

Table. 14.

MATCHES' NR.		STEALS	AV		MATCHES' NR.		STEALS	AV
POSITIVE					NEGATIVE			
FRA	8	37	4,6		NOR	3	3	1
ESP	8	31	3,9		CZE	3	6	2
POL	7	26	3,7		MNE	3	7	2,3
HUN	6	22	3,7		MKD	6	12	2

Table 15.

MATCHES' NR. Blocked Shots AV				MATCHES' NR. Blocked Shots AV			
POSITIVE				NEGATIVE			
DEN	8	40	5	MNE	3	2	0,66
ESP	8	38	5	NOR	3	2	0,66
SWE	6	28	4,7	BLR	6	11	1,8
CRO	8	25	3.1	MKD	6	9	1.5

- The best ranked teams had, as one might expect, many steals and blocked shots.
- On the other hand, lower ranked teams had fewer steals and blocks. This is partly related to those countries with traditional preferences of defence systems. It is, moreover, related to the age, experience and technical level of their players.

Table 16.

POSITIVE						NEGATIVE					
Matches' Nr.		ST	BS	AGG	AV	Matches' Nr.		ST	BS	AGG	AV
POSITIVE						NEGATIVE					
FRA	8	37	23	60	7,5	SRB	3	8	7	15	5
DEN	8	23	40	63	7,9	NOR	3	3	2	5	1,6
ESP	8	31	38	69	8,6	CZE	3	6	11	17	5,4
CRO	8	23	25	48	6	MNE	3	7	2	9	3

- These statistical data show very well how important steals and blocks are in terms of effectiveness.

Goalkeepers Performance

- The average efficiency of the goalkeepers was 31%. In other words, they saved almost every third shot.

Table 17.

EFF. (%)			CONCEDED GOALS/MATCH			EFF. (%)			CONCEDED GOALS/MATCH		
POSITIVE						NEGATIVE					
NOR	40	28				BLR	23	32			
DEN	35	28				MNE	29	28			
CZE	35	29				RUS	29	30			
POL	34	26									

- The results of the teams, the goals conceded and the efficiency of the defence are not directly proportional to one another.
- The goalkeepers of teams that played only three matches were unable to reach 40% (except Norway).
- The performances of the goalkeepers show rather similar values as an average. Among 10 teams the average was between 30% and 32%.

Table 18. *Table of back-shot efficiency*

EFF. (%)			EFF. (%)	
POSITIVE			NEGATIVE	
CZE	86		BLE	46
FRA	83		ISL	51
POL	81		ESP	54
DEN	76			

- These data show how the goalkeepers worked with the field players against the regular offensive plays.
- The defending players of CZE, FRA, POL, and DEN are quite tall, strong and experienced, so they can work very well together with their goalkeepers against the back-shots.
- Surprisingly ESP was not especially good in this, even though their defending players fit the above profile. On the other hand, they did defend very well from 6m and on breakthroughs (37% and 38%)

Findings and evaluation of the first four teams

4th Place: CRO

- The CRO team arrived at the tournament without their long-time star, Ivano Balic, who was the driving creative force for them over the last 10 years.
- The playmaker position was taken by the excellent D. Duvnjak, who proved to be team's best player. Due to injuries Lackovic could not play either.
- The 210 cm tall Kopljar – who also played well in defence – scored some spectacular goals.
- The wing players – as usual – shot a number of goals from their wing positions and from fast breaks.
- In the semi-final and in the bronze-medal match, they lost by only 2 and 1 goals, respectively. As for the LB, LP and GK positions, I believe they performed better during the previous tournaments.
- When CRO got the ball they often immediately started a fast break. In this they were one of the most successful teams.

3rd Place: ESP

- The world champions arrived with a very strong team. This despite the fact that one of the best goalkeepers in the world, A. Sterbik could not participate in the tournament due to injury. Sterbik has been so important to Spain not just because of his saves, but also for his precise passes in the fastbreaks, a strong reason for their success.
- The Spanish goalkeepers' performance on the ECH was below average, even though they scored most of their goals (47) from fast-break action. That was owing more to the fact that the team's number of steals and the blocked shots was the highest among the teams.
- For balls won this way they scored a lot of goals. Perhaps ESP had the strongest team, certainly the strongest bench.

- Their back players are tall and strong, successful both in long shots and break-throughs.
- By their cross movements they created space for the LP. Individually the players are technically sound; all of them are able to perform outstandingly. While in defence they try to play a clean game with obviously few faults.
- Among them J. Canellas stood out. He finished as the ECH top scorer.

2nd Place: DEN

- DEN also has a very strong team: European Champion two years ago and second place at the WCH last year.
- They especially wanted to win the tournament since they were playing at before home crowds. They won all seven of their matches leading up to the final. The final played out similarly to the WCH final last year, losing by a large margin.
- What was noteworthy were the number of goals scored and how few were conceded.
- More often than not they attacked employing the fast break, which was very well executed.
- One of the best attackers of the tournament was M. Hansen, who scored spectacular goals from distance and from break-throughs. He also distributed a number of very nice assists.
- The goalkeeper of the team N. Landin was awarded best goalkeeper of the ECH -- and he deserved it.
- Two important players, Mogensen and Eggert, were coming back from injury; neither was in top form. To sum up, DEN gave a fine performance throughout the tournament, enjoying the advantage of being on home soil.

1st Place: FRA

- The French team proved again -- after crashing out recently with poor performances -- that their team is the best in Europe. The team is composed of first-class players, and they topped off their efforts with an unforgettable final game. They played a very motivated, focused and well-disciplined handball during the tournament. They lost just one game -- against SWE. They conceded the fewest number of goals and scored the most. They won their matches by an average of 7 goals.
- In the starting line-up five world class players can be found. A new, young left-handed player appeared, V. Porte. Porte may turn out to be one of the most outstanding players in the future.
- N. Karabatic, Narcisse and Abalo are all able to single-handedly create opportunities for themselves and their teammates. They gained such an advantage in attack that they seemed always to be creating a good shot. In the LP position Sorhaindo proved to be best at the ECH. The goalkeeper Omeyer returned very motivated and performed well. France's other goalkeeper, Dumoulin, was solid throughout the tournament. In all elements of the game -- defence, attack, counter-attack -- their performance was excellent. In a word, they proved to be the best.

Summary conclusions and trends

- On the national teams little time could be spared for the preparation of the ECH due to the large number of players playing abroad in foreign teams.
- At the beginning of the tournament this was clear to see by the play of several teams, but it one also saw marked improvement from game to game.
- There is less “national character” displayed in the play as strategy and tactics become better known throughout the continent.
- The solution in the attacks became unified: everybody used the same sets with greater or lesser success.
- Play became more predictable. There were few new or unexpected solutions.
- Generally on defence the teams used a closed system (6:0), making use of the physical attributes and skills of the players.
- The coaches trusted more in the older, more experienced players.
- The active careers of the players have been extended owing to new training methods and better diet.
- Recreation, rehabilitation, prevention and medical care all serve this aim.
- In general the level of the matches was high during the ECH.
- Those teams which depended for their attack upon one player (CZE: Jicha, BLR: Ruthenka, SRB: Ilic, MKD: Lazarov) were less successful.
- NOR played with a number of young players. This likely points to good things for them in the future.
- AUT won, something of a surprise. Even in losing against CZE and HUN the margin of defeat was small.
- ISL's 5th-place finish was a good result. They improved 5 places from the last ECH.
- The first four teams were outstanding from the participant's field: FRA, ESP, CRO, and DEN. They did not lose any points in the preliminary round and reached the semi-final easily, where they played high-level games against one other.
- FRA showed the most outstanding individual and team performance without weak points. In the semi-final and the final they won decisively against ESP and DEN, clearly establishing who had the best team.
- In two weeks 47 games were played. The teams proved again that handball is one of the world's best team sports. The matches were spectacular and exciting, with great interest both from the spectators and the media.

Young players for the future

AUT: M. Hermann (22 years, RB)

R. Santos (21, LW)

SRB: N. Zelenovic (23, RB)

FRA: M. Grebille (22, LB)

V. Porte (23, RB)

CZE: M. Kasal (19, LB)

POL: P. Syprzak (22, LP)
MKD: G. Georgiewski (21, RW)
D. Manaskov (21, LW)
RUS: S. Kudinov (22, LB)
SWE: M. Zahrisson (23, RW)
A. Nilsson (23, LP)
HUN: G. Ancsin (23, RB)
CRO: I. Sliskovic (22, LB)
ISL: A. Palmarsson (23, LB)
O. Gudmundsson (23, LB)
NOR: H. Reinkind (21, RB)
K. Tonessen (22, RB)
S. Sagosen (18, CB) !!!
O. Sullivan (22, CB)
BLR: D. Kamyshik (23, LW)
ESP: G. Perez de Vargas Moreno (23, GK)

The All star team

GK: N. Landin (DEN)
LW: G. Sigurdsson (ISL)
LB: M. Hansen (DEN)
CB: D. Duvnjak (CRO)
LP: J. Aguinagalde Akizu (ESP)
RB: K. Lijewski (POL)
RW: L. Abalo (FRA)
MVP: N. Karabatic (FRA)
Best scorer: J. Canellas (ESP)
Best defender: T. Karlson (SWE)