

The XIX World Championship for Women Junior

and

the “Korean Phenomenon”

by Frantisek TABORSKY / EHF Lecturer

Starting with the First Junior Women World Championship (1977 in Romania) already 19 editions for this age category (20 years and younger) were organized. Most world titles won the team from Russia: 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989 and 1991 as former URS (Union of Soviets Republics) and 1993, 2001, 2003 and 2005 as RUS. Only one team outside Europe was able to disturb the clear hegemony of the “old” continent. Before the WCh in Croatia the national selection of South Korea (KOR) gained three times silver (1985, 1989 and 1991), four times bronze medals 1983, 1993 and 2005). The final victory on July 13, 2014 in Koprivnica was the first gold medal in this category not only for KOR but also for a team outside the European continent. After a defeat from CZE in the second match of preliminary group (27:30) KOR was not the favorite for the world title in Croatia. But the Koreans were able to gradually improve their performance. They beat two strong opponents in the group, the home team of CRO 29:27 and NOR 34:27 and then in the eighth final SRB 32:28, in the quarterfinal ROU 36:27, in the semifinal GER 28:24 and in the final match also the favourite team of RUS clear 34:27. Therefore it pays off to look at the reasons for this success.

What is most characteristic for the playing performance of the team from Korea?

The Korean squad demonstrated together with second placed team of Russia the best characteristics concerning the number of achieved goals; attack efficiency and shooting efficiency – see the **Table 1**: Cumulative Statistics of Score, Attacks, Technical Fouls and Efficiency. Among the best eight ranked teams KOR - because of their very active defence and offence – had the highest average values of attacks per match but remained at an average of technical faults. Under the average of the best eight teams Korea was only at the goalkeepers' efficiency.

We will mention, describe and select video sequences which demonstrate – according to our opinion - **three main pillars of the Korean performance**:

- A. Team spirit, discipline and physical readiness.
- B. Active, elastic and anticipatory defence in a large area.
- C. Attack variability.

A. Team spirit, discipline and physical readiness

In the Korean team it was clearly evident which players belonged to the “basic seven” and which to the “substitutes”. **Table 2** contains basic information about the players who bore the greatest load and contributed fundamentally to the winning success during the WCh. Six basic field players scored together 231 (73,8 %) from totally 313 goals. Together with the first goalkeeper they were on court more than 45 hours (around 72 %) from 63 possible hours in total during the whole tournament. But the “substitutes” were always fully concentrated; the “bench” was mentally connected with the play on court and always ready. Team discipline and the respect to coaches intermingled significantly also during warming up and the behavior of the players during team time-outs and half times.

Table 2: Most Common Line-up in Attack and Position in Defence by the Team of Korea

Left Wing	Pivot	Right Wing
Sujeong KIM (# 7) 163 - 58, 25.02.1995 7:06:07 (9), 34/54 = 63,0 % Def: Left Half (extended)	Seonpil WON (# 10) 174 – 65, 06.08.1994 6:17:04 (9), 29/35 = 82,9 % Def: Back Center	Jinsil KIM (# 15) 170 - 60, 01.10.1994 6:48:26 (9), 24/39 = 61,5 % Def: Right Half (extended)
Left Back	Centre Back	Right Back
Suyeon JO (# 23) 174 - 61, 06.07.1994 5:37:38 (9), 30/62 = 48,4 % Def: Front Center	Hyojin LEE (# 6) 168 - 55, 22.04.1994 6:13:53 (9), 64/100 = 64,0 % Def: Left Outside	Sojeong YU (# 29) 168 - 62, 04.06.1996 7:04:25 (9), 50/76 = 65,8 % Def: Right outside
Goalkeeper		Defence Specialist
Saeyoung PARK (# 16) 174 - 62, 11.08.1994 6:29:01 (9), 86/256 = 33,6 %		None

The average body height of the Korean squad was 170,3 cm. Also more than 7 centimeters less than the average of the second finalist RUS (177,6 cm). Likewise the averages of the main opponents GER, ROU, NOR and CRO on the way to the finals were more than 5 centimeters higher. Despite that Korea was able to succeed against distinctly better featured rivals in terms of body height. This disadvantage was compensated with extraordinary physical fitness. Without that and without excellent technical and tactical qualities it would not be possible to realize the two remaining pillars successfully .

B. Active, elastic and anticipatory defense in a large area

The philosophy of the Korean defense was evidently to avoid direct body contact with the opponent as much as possible and to put constant pressure on the opponent at a greater distance from the own goal area. This concept was applied already in the past but for the first time the Korean team was able to use this physically very demanding style not only through the whole match but also during the whole tournament. The basic formation was 1+0:5 (personal defense in the pivot area) see e.g. [video clips 1 and 2](#). On a running in by the wings or back court attackers the defenders responded with a consequent, close monitoring and take-overs as well as by the attempts of break-throughs and shots with helping – see e.g. [video clips 3 and 4](#). In same clips and also on [video clips 5 and 6](#) the immediate use of pass mistakes or shots for starting fast attack breaks is demonstrated. The adaptability of defense was also checked during failed attempts of GER to disrupt Korean defending style by means of the application of seven attackers – see [video clips 7 and 8](#). Examples of the Korean defense during numerical superiority can be found in [video clip 9](#) and during inferiority on [video clip 10](#) (5 against 6) and [video clip 11](#) (4 against 5) where the quick, active movement resulted in mistakes by the opponents.

C. Variability in attack

The variability in attack is based on the perfect technical skills and tactical consistency. One of the important abilities was the **change of tempo** of attacking activities according to situational needs. This was especially apparent in both the relatively slow preparation and the subsequent quick realization of attack combinations – see one example in [video clip 12](#) (and also further).

The shots from the **back** court area were realized very often after a simple preparation of the jumps avoiding the defending blocks of the opponents – e.g. [video clips 13, 14, 15 and 16](#).

The **pivot** play was not one of the best “weapons” of KOR, despite the fact that the pivot quite often was involved in the preparation of combinations like in [video clip 17](#). Sometimes it resulted also in pivot shooting – see [video clips 18 and 19](#) (the latter by numerical superiority).

The attackers in **wing** positions used simple combinations like e.g. in [video clip 20](#), sometimes with an attractive final pass: [video clip 21](#) (against 6:0 defense) and [video clip 22](#)

(against a 5:0+1 defense). But wing players were also able to both prepare and win the situation one against one.

An accelerated change of the direction of movement has been successfully applied by the solution of **one against one** situation especially by back court players. The examples can be found in the **video clips 23, 24 and 25.**

The simple and effective exploitation of the **standard situations** of free throw is noteworthy, too. The shot was realized after two or three passes from another space – see as examples **video clips 26 and 27,** similar by throw-in from the right corner followed by a surprising stand shot from the left back position – **video clip 28.C**

Conclusion

The young handball players from Korea greatly increased the performance level of the Women Junior World Championship. They demonstrated that the winning of a match does not need physical superiority. There is no doubt that it has given an inspiration not only for other non-European countries but also for the top teams from Europe.

(Taborsky, status 18.11.2014)

Table 1: Cumulative Statistics of Score, Attacks, Technical Fouls and Efficiency

R	Team	MP	Total Score	Average Result	Diff.	Total Att.	Aver. Att.	Total TF	Aver. TF	Att. Eff	Shoot. Eff	Keep. Eff
1	KOR	9	313 : 238	34,8 : 26,4	+ 8,4	632	70,2	134	14,9	49,5 %	62,6 %	34,6 %
2	RUS	9	312 : 229	34,7 : 25,4	+ 9,3	610	67,8	124	13,8	51,1 %	64,2 %	37,3 %
3	DEN	9	270 : 213	30,0 : 23,7	+ 6,3	610	67,8	113	12,6	44,3 %	54,3 %	39,7 %
4	GER	9	236 : 204	26,2 : 22,7	+ 3,5	597	66,3	144	16,0	39,5 %	52,1 %	40,2 %
5	FRA	9	250 : 203	27,8 : 22,6	+ 5,2	597	66,3	160	17,8	41,9 %	57,2 %	40,3 %
6	ROU	9	257 : 238	28,6 : 26,4	+ 2,2	576	64,0	113	12,6	44,6 %	55,5 %	29,8 %
7	HUN	9	241 : 165	26,8 : 18,3	+ 8,5	567	63,0	121	13,4	42,5 %	54,0 %	44,6 %
8	NED	9	206 : 241	22,9 : 26,8	- 3,9	562	62,4	129	14,3	36,7 %	47,6 %	30,3 %
9	NOR	9	300 : 218	33,3 : 24,2	+ 9,1	612	68,0	103	11,4	49,0 %	58,9 %	32,9 %
10	CRO	9	219 : 182	24,3 : 20,2	+ 4,1	510	56,7	116	12,9	42,9 %	55,6 %	40,1 %
11	CZE	9	247 : 252	27,4 : 28,0	- 0,6	634	70,4	145	16,1	39,0 %	50,5 %	34,2 %
12	SRB	9	247 : 274	27,4 : 30,4	- 3,0	590	65,6	171	19,0	41,9 %	58,9 %	29,2 %
13	SWE	9	205 : 209	22,8 : 23,2	- 0,4	577	64,1	130	14,4	35,5 %	45,9 %	32,1 %
14	SLO	9	226 : 257	25,1 : 28,6	- 3,5	555	61,7	165	18,3	40,7 %	57,9 %	30,7 %
15	BRA	9	218 : 225	24,2 : 25,0	- 0,8	527	58,6	129	14,3	41,4 %	54,8 %	33,8 %
16	POR	9	222 : 240	24,7 : 26,7	- 2,0	606	67,3	166	18,4	36,6 %	50,5 %	32,2 %
17	JPN	7	182 : 212	26,0 : 30,3	- 4,3	500	71,4	129	18,4	36,4 %	49,1 %	30,3 %
18	URU	7	158 : 226	22,6 : 32,3	- 9,7	466	66,6	156	22,3	33,9 %	51,0 %	21,0 %
19	CHN	7	159 : 198	22,7 : 28,3	- 5,6	451	64,4	120	17,1	35,3 %	48,0 %	27,7 %
20	ARG	7	163 : 196	23,3 : 28,0	- 4,7	467	66,7	124	17,7	34,9 %	47,5 %	29,5 %
21	ANG	7	198 : 201	28,3 : 28,7	- 0,4	506	72,3	163	23,3	39,1 %	57,7 %	32,1 %
22	TUN	7	160 : 211	22,9 : 30,1	- 7,2	411	58,7	92	13,1	38,9 %	50,2 %	21,0 %
23	KAZ	7	150 : 241	21,4 : 34,4	- 13,0	508	72,6	152	21,7	29,5 %	42,1 %	24,5 %
24	COD	7	132 : 198	18,9 : 28,3	- 9,4	434	62,0	162	23,1	30,4 %	48,5 %	26,9 %
1 - 8		72 ²	2085:1731	29,0 : 24,0	+ 5,0	4751	66,0	1038	14,4	43,9 %	56,1 %	37,0 %
9 - 16		72 ²	1884:1857	26,2 : 25,8	+ 0,4	4611	64,0	1125	15,6	40,9 %	54,0 %	33,0 %
17 - 24		56 ²	1302:1683	23,3 : 30,1	- 6,8	3743	66,8	1098	19,6	34,8 %	49,2 %	26,7 %
Total		100	5271:5271	26,4 : 26,4		13105	65,5	3261	16,3	40,2 %	53,5 %	32,5 %

© Taborsky

MP = Matches Played, **Att.** = Attacks, **TF** = Technical Fouls, **Aver.** = Average,

Eff = Efficiency, **Shoot.** = Shooting, **Keep.** = Keeping