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Original article

DEFENDING IN THE HANDBALL GAME (JUNIOR LEVEL)

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Abstract

Problem statement. The new trends in technical, strategic, physical handball development require more and more features of players who need to be faster, more dynamic, versatile in both attack and defense, technically skilled, capable of playing from any position, have an excellent perception of play.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the importance of defense systems in handball games. At national level, the defensive game concept follows on-the-ground application of basic features and principles to ensure greater efficiency of game systems. In this sense, it is intended to create a supranumerical agglomeration in the ball area, to increase the individual aggression and implicitly the entire defense system. The evolution of the defense, as well as its modern technical means, allow through the increase of individual aggressivity to neutralize the shot. Current research shows the level of force and the number of throws at the goal as criteria for determining the level of training of a player and team. This aspect led to a new defense orientation - the blocking of the attackers throwing at the gate of Line II. Thus, defense has become advanced, with strong, dynamic players. It is revealed that 75% of the time of play is dedicated to defense.

The current defenses are very organized and very aggressive, with great cohesiveness and cooperation of the goalkeepers with the defending players. Radical changes in defense systems occur in matches depending on the opponent and the situation of the game.

The zone defense system is most commonly used by European teams, while non-European teams opt for offensive defense to counteract morphological disability.

Conclusions. The defender of today must be a universal athlete with field mobility to defend man to man, increasing interaction with teammates, who actively participate in individual and group blockages.

Key words: handball, defense, juniors.

Introduction

The performance in handball depends on a diversity of individual skills and on the interaction between different players within the team.

The technical requirements of the players and their physical requirements vary depending on the positions they are playing on. The wings perform the biggest distances in running/sprinting, of high intensity compared to the other players, but they are involved in less one on one duels. The handball game needs players that repeat the explosive actions like sprints, jumps, changes of direction and throwing at maximum intensity. The requirements of the game are mostly dependant on the play positions (Kruger K. and colab., 2014, p. 119), which explains the difference in technical, profile, anthropometric level (Kruger K. and colab., 2014, p. 124), and the physical performance of the players representative for each position (Michalsik L., 2011, p 171).

Obtaining high quality sport result cannot be conceived without a rationalization of the entire training process corresponding to some well-set

requirements and norms for each level of training of different forms of defence.

Taking into consideration that in a handball game, the number of offence phases is relatively equal with those of defence phases, in the training period, the time allocated for training the defence game should be approximately equal with those allocated for training the offence phases, which in practice this does not happen.

In the high performance handball, but also for the juniors' level, only those teams which are standing out through an exact defence obtain valuable performances, so that in all high performance handball echelons it is necessary to find some ways and means with a higher degree of applicability and attractiveness, focused on the optimisation of the defence game.

Alternating the defence systems highlights the level of training and knowledge of the technical and tactical concepts of the players, as well as the ability of the coaches to choose the best defence forms and systems and to apply them in the game, reported to the particularities of their own players, as well as of the competitors.

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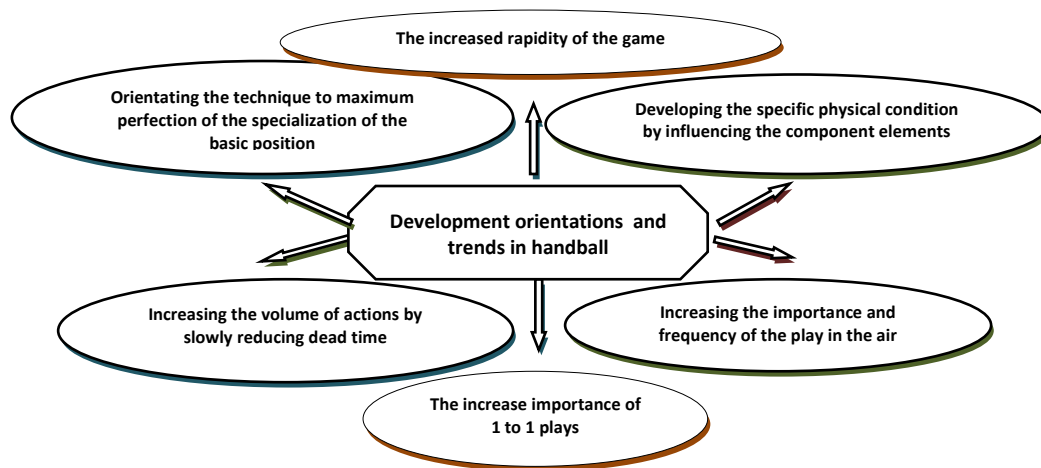
The handball game and all that sets the complexity of the sports training is in a continuous evolution and certainly with a permanent accelerated dynamic.

In all aspects of the game and modern sports training, there are numerous elements of progress, of perfection, absolute novelties, but also some updates of the superior parameters.

The competition is very high at all levels; everyone is looking for the perfection of the game and of the training process, wishing to surprise and to outperform the others. It is necessary a permanent attention and information on the game and training which

indubitably evolves, being absolutely mandatory to analyse and acquire these aspects.

We present further a synthesis of the orientations and trends of handball nationally and internationally taken from the analysis of the speciality documents of the federations, from the opinions of the contemporary specialists and from the researches focused on the study of the somatic, physiologic, motor and psychological parameters of the modern handball player.



Picture 1: Development trends and directions in handball

At the children's level, the general and specific physical training must have a high importance, taking an important place in their training. It is followed to master the basis of the basic techniques and tactics of handball, in compliance with the age particularities and difficulty of the planned content.

In planning the training model of the junior players, a great importance is given to the individualization of the training. Through this type of training, they can perfect their motor qualities, they can master the specialization on the position and they can acquire the content of some sub-specializations on the position in the conditions of universalization in games. Individualization does not decrease the importance of the collective training neither qualitative, nor quantitative, but it insures the framework for integrating the values within the team.

The training model for the juniors must be planned so that it has an alternation of the particularities of the players between the individual and collective training.

The training objectives for juniors II are represented by increasing continuously the indices of the basic and specific motor qualities, the improvement of specialization on the positions, the

development of the individual game tactic, highlighting the incorporation of those already acquired, and their particularization at the requirements met in the offence or defence game.

All defence systems must create a problem for the attackers of the other team. From this perspective, there are constantly created defence systems, which block the different offence actions through the continuous possibility to adapt to the conditions and quick tactical changes of the opponents.

Nationally, the conception of defence game will aim to apply on the court the characteristics and the basic principles, which ensure an increased efficiency to the game systems. It aims to create the supranumerical report in the ball area, increasing the individual aggressiveness and implicitly of the entire defence system. These two orientations can be developed based on a corresponding improvement of the offence of the opponent with the ball, dribbling, scoring, following the centre back.

This concept of play determines, nationally, the biggest mobility on the court and increased running speed of the players. The new game conception sets, nationally, at the level of all performance players' echelons the game in the system.

As it was mentioned, the recently adopted changes regarding the handball game lead to an accelerated way of playing, the goal attempts being performed in different ways. In this perspective, it is interesting for both the coaches and players to be conscious of the indicators associated with the defence systems in order to increase the chances to win (Oscar, G.A. and Pascual, P.J.A, 2011, p3).

In the play and training conception internationally, there are always occurring new ideas generated by the process of developing the game, of the competition requirements, of the innovative spirit of the technicians, of the discoveries of the scientific research in regard to the concern to discover new resources and availabilities for increasing the performing capacity.

The handball significantly progressed through a rigorous and spectacular game, the components of the current game being studied by more authors: (Bayer, C., 1993, pp. 103-105, Constantini, D., 2004, pp86-112) and others, their opinions reunite and maybe resume them in:

➤ Increasing the game speed

- an accentuated dynamic of the game (moving speed)
- developing the game in movement based on changing the play positions;
- quick game through removing the preparatory phases;
- the rapid execution of the throws and passes
- the game on counterattack with high speed

Indeed, at the creation of this sport, the concept of “getting the ball back and to throw a goal as fast as possible” was a principle attached to all schools and to their basic methodology. This thing determined the qualification of the handball game as being as quick as basketball.

➤ Technical mastery

- it refers to the real time of participating in the game and at the number of mistakes made in executing the technical actions;
- the high performance can not have a technique without address. The high level players showed a certain rigor in play through:
 - An improvement of the psycho-motricity at high level, leading to more and more acrobatic techniques
 - An improvement of the individual abilities of the offence players, very strong throws
 - A superior gesture control at the level of the passes and reception even in delicate conditions;

➤ Tactical discipline

Because the physical training and mastery are considered to be already acquired by a high level player, the tactical fight often makes possible surprising the opponent, from which it is the importance of this play component.

We often hear in the team sports that the best offence is defence. So, in order to be successful, a

team must have a quality defence. In order to achieve this, the players must comply with certain key concepts, to operate in conditions of reciprocity and to apply a correct defence (Dragnea, A. Caliman, C., Cristea-Mic, N., 2014, paper adapted, supplemented and re- systematized after Macovei, B., pp 13-14, 17-23).

The current defences are very organized and very aggressive, with a high cohesion and a collaboration of the goalkeeper with the defence players. The radical changes in the defence systems occur in games depending on the opponent and the situation of the game.

The defence system in the area is the most frequent used by the European teams, while the non-European teams choose an offensive defence (pressing) to counterattack the morphological handicap.

Obtaining the victory reflects in the optimisation of the counterattack. In the placed attack, there is no great variability of the used tactic; the tactical combinations do not serve so much in front of the defence that is quickly adapting. On the other hand, there is a more and more individual game based on 1 to 1 (duel offence player – defence player) and the creative spirit of the sportsman, which interrupts the defensive organization.

The defensive phases are characterized through the lack of possession of the ball. To succeed to score goals, the athletes must get the ball back. This recovery can be made in a passive way by waiting the mistake of the opponent (mistakes during the circulation of the ball or throwing at the goal), or after scoring a goal. But it can also be done in an active way, through interception of the ball, which takes the opportunity away from the opponent to throw to the goal and score. This active interception is within a frame of a psychic training of the defender to impose the contribution of a collective and individual force which opposes the attackers through not having the ball, interrupting the actions which stops them to play according to the plan adopted in offence. So, we have to offer an offensive mentality to the defenders.

Logically, after loosing the ball, the players must actively and quickly try to take it back. The interception represents the first tactical intention, which must be developed in players. “It is admitted, once and for all, that the defence game starts with loosing the ball” (Barcnas, S., 1980, p. 20). Thus, the defence play is represented by the moment when the team and the player take measures to get the ball back (priority action) and to protect the goal.

The main mission of the defender is to go as close as possible near the attacker, which has or will have the ball. Also, he must be always be ready to support their team mate. The gestures they must adopt are hands above the shoulders.

There are different defence techniques in the team play, the players having to master a lot of game systems.

Besides the collective defence, there are also individual defence techniques in handball. There are two types of defence, including the defence without making mistakes (fault) and the defence with non-dangerous faults.

When we talk about a defence without a fault, it is about:

- blocking the opponent with the body;
- stopping the opponent to go further than the 9 meter line
- using the arms in the air so that the opponent to be blocked at the angles where he can throw the ball at the goal

In case of an aggressive defence with fault, the defender must:

- remove the danger, meaning to push the opponent so that he doesn't reach 9 meters;
- block the opponent to stop him from raising his arm in the throwing position;
- block the opponent's arm while he stays in front of him

In handball, the current research presents the level of force and number of throws at the goal as being criteria for determining the level of training of a player and of a team. This aspect determined a new orientation in defence – blocking the opponents, which throw at the goal from the Line II. So, the defence became advanced, with dynamic, strong players. The parameters taken in consideration at these researches, regarding the defence, revealed that 75% of the time of play is dedicated to the defence, that the defence is zonal, and the principle to perform the defence “man to man” have led to actions of individual defence to a maximum efficiency.

Nowadays, the defender must be an universal athlete, with mobility on the field, which defends man to man, increasing interaction with his team mates, which actively participates at individual blockages, but also in the group ones (Constantini, D. 2004, pp 86-112). The research performed with the purpose to highlight the way of obtaining the performances in the handball game have been finalized most of the times with the recommendations of the authors regarding the methods of improving the technical and tactical behaviour of the athletes and of the process of training.

Ensuring the defence balance and the timely pullback in defence are characteristics of defence in the system. The withdrawal is made on the shortest way, so that the visual contact with the ball is not lost, but also with the movement of the opponents. This phase lasts until the majority or even all players have reached near the semicircle of their own goal. Most of the times, the future success of the defence depends on the quality of the pullback.

The temporary defence is the activity performed against the quick offence of the opponents. To adequately move in, it is necessary that the defenders to distinguish the methods used by the players in offence.

In this phase, the players must quickly pullback, must be preoccupied to find the best placement in the field (between the opponent and the own goal), to anticipate the actions of the opponents and of the team mates, to offer help.

The temporary zone will have to solve the interruption of the adverse phase II, as well as the initiation phase of the quickly organized offence.

The defenders will take action in compliance with the purposes of the temporary zone:

- covering the semicircle
- stopping the quick offence
- delaying the throwing at the goal

The duration of the temporary defence is of a few seconds and it is connected to the arrival of all players at the 6m semicircle and to the character of the opponent's offence.

Organizing the defence implies that each player, after pullback, to get back in the set place in the defence plan. This phase is a continuation of those previously presented and then when the players fit into the defence system, these becomes a typical phase. Organizing the defence is only performed when the offence of the opponents is performed in its positional form. The players can reach their places during the defence actions and when the referee interrupts the game.

The fourth phase of playing in defence is performed in an organized method, highlighting the individual actions of play, as well as interrelations and collaborations between the players.

The defence in the system can start from the moment of the pullback under the form of defence man to man. This type of defence is represented by the responsibility of each player for an opponent.

Using the learned technical tactical methods, the players will try to stop any action from the attackers (he opposes when he wants to make a pass, to get the ball or to lead it into the court, decisively moves in when the opponent wants to throw at the goal).

The individual duel is also manifested collectively, obliging the players to collaborate between them. For this, the defenders allocate the opponents, collaborate through verbal communication, perform slidings, change the man between them, they are helping each other through creating a supranumerical agglomeration in the ball area and at the goal.

The man to man defence is made on the entire court or on half of the court and if marking the opponents is very tight, it can be called pressing. Kunst-Ghermanescu I., (1983, p. 139) indicates also another method of this system, namely man to man defence with agglomeration. Through this method of defence,

this author considers that the best attackers are removed from the game so it is played with an advantage.

The man to man defence system is applied if the opponent team is in numeric inferiority, if the opponent has a weaker technical and physical training and if it aims to surprise the opponent and disturbing him, getting him out of the play rhythm.

The second type of defence system that can be used in the fourth phase is the defence in the zone. Specific for this form of defence is the fan shape of the players on the court, before the space of the goal, on one, two or even three lines. The difference from the two types of defence systems is that the player mainly follows the ball and after that the opponent he is responsible of. The movements of the body are in a lateral plan to create the idea of a supranumeric agglomeration on the direction of the ball.

Although defence in the zone has an accentuated collective character, each player has tasks of great responsibility for which they must comply with a few rules (maintaining the position in defence, keeping a special attention, searching for the best location, starting and performing the actions in due time, strict marking of the opponent, attacking the opponent that received the ball, physical engagement in the action, giving mutual help, communication with the team mates, anticipating the defence actions, using any occasion to get possession of the ball).

The third system of defence used in the fourth phase is combined defence. This defence system combines the rules of man to man defence, which is performed by one or two players and those of zone defence by the other players. By tight marking the best player, the force of the offence is significantly reduced, this aspect representing an advantage for the players in defence.

At the level of juniors II, the defence in the system can be represented by the defence in the zone (options 6+0, 5+1 and combined 5+1 man to man).

Any defensive system takes in consideration all the elements of the game: ball, defence objective, defence spaces, spaces to use, partners, opponents. From here, it occurs the need of each player to use the information so that he has the chance to use the different technical and tactical elements at the moment of the game.

Any defensive system allows the play of different tactical defence intentions: intercepting, discouragement, distance control and the game on the trajectory of throwing at the goal, harassment, help (change of people, doubling).

But each system favours an element of the game:

- the defence system in the area favours the play with ball
- the defence system man to man favours marking the opponent

The game makes every team, one at a time, in the situation to be an attacker or a defender. The two moments of the game are happening very quickly in the contemporary handball game.

Defending the goal is a permanent task of all players, task which is manifested throughout the entire game. It requires the organization corresponding of all actions and special collective efforts.

With all these, the goalkeeper is responsible to protect the goal. Even in case of applying without mistake the technical tactical elements in defence, there will always be attackers that will succeed to throw at the goal.

Marking the opponent on the throwing arm of the opponent helps the goalkeeper to be able to notice the intention to throw and the direction of the throw to the goal. The goalkeeper must permanently see the ball and take advantage of the tactical game of the defenders, but also of his own talent.

Conclusions

In the high performance handball, but also for the juniors' level, only those teams which are standing out through an exact defence obtain valuable performances, so that in all high performance handball echelons it is necessary to find some ways and means with a higher degree of applicability and attractiveness, focused on the optimisation of the defence game.

Alternating the defence systems highlights the level of training and knowledge of the technical and tactical concepts of the players, as well as the ability of the coaches to choose the best defence forms and systems and to apply them in the game, reported to the particularities of their own players, as well as of the competitors.

Knowing the theoretical problems of the sports training, so big and inclusive, helps the coaches in organizing the smallest details of the training process of the athletes within a team. The notions of individual and collective must be complementary and also individual when it comes of coaching a team for obtaining the victory.

Only through knowing in detail the sports phenomena performed in the training, exceptional performers can be modelled.

The future research in determining the methods of training for the handball players can take into consideration the following aspects:

- the effects of the training on developing the components of the training
- investigating the effects of a pressing in defence on the physical qualities of the players. Determining the connection between the movement on the court and the physical requirements of the players in report to different types of defence that will lead to

obtaining important information regarding the interaction of the components of the sports training

- monitoring the cardiac rhythm, the travelled distance, the speed of movement, court localization through modern GPS systems can supply important data for planning and applying some exercises which will improve the performance of the handball players. These data can be registered on the short and long term, allowing the coach, physical trainer to determine the necessary adequate tasks to ensure the optimal adaptation to effort in order to maximize the performance at the future competitions;

- the notational analysis can offer data on the factors which led to the performance of the team or to its failure during matches and implicitly, competitions;

Orientating towards these research directions will certainly lead to obtaining valuable information for this sport and especially for training the athletes engaged in this Olympic sport.

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