

EHF M20 EURO 2022

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

07 – 17 July 2022 Porto, Portugal

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Introduction

The event took place in Porto / POR from July 7 – 17, 2022.

16 teams had qualified for the event and played in four preliminary groups. The best two of each group formed two groups of main rounds, the inferior two played on in intermediate groups.

After that cross-over matches were carried out leading to placement matches finally.

Final ranking

1 Spain	2 Portugal	3 Serbia	4 Sweden	5 Hungary	6 France
7 Germany	8 Denmark	9 Slovenia	10 Faroe Islands	11 Iceland	12 Italy
13 Poland	14 Croatia	15 Norway	16 Montenegro		

The first 8 teams were selected for closer inspection in the way that three matches were observed at least, the team of ESP was observed in 5 matches in total.

Here is the list of the matches picked for the observation.

Preliminaries

ESP-POR 35-36 (16-15) DEN-FAR 32-33 (15-15) POL-ESP 32-41 (20-19)

Main round

ESP-HUN 32-30 (19-13) SWE-SRB 27-32 (12-15) FRA-GER 27-32 (13-12)

Cross matches

DEN-FRA 25-27 (11-12) GER-HUN 32-35 (16-19)

Semifinals

POR-SWE 25-24 (12-10) SRB-ESP 29-32 (10-15)

Placement matches

DEN-GER 27-32 (14-16) FRA-HUN 29-35 (14-16)

Finals

SWE-SRB 25-30 (12-17) POR-ESP 35-37 (16-15)

From these matches the encounter POL-ESP had to be eliminated from the statistical data processing due to the very specific character of the second period with 9 empty net scores by ESP.

These matches had been recorded live and I was provided with them by the EHF on a “Seagate” Expansion HDD 4TB. This procedure allowed for multiple observations and an extremely detailed documentation of the issues in question.

The graphics were done with the program “Sport Coaching TRAINER V3” copyright 2006 Global Sports Solutions, running on a HP Compaq nc6320.

General trends

It has to be stated that the general impression that was given after the same event in 2016 in DEN has increased even. Then I wrote that the performance in offense play was pretty good in terms of athletics, variability in shooting, in the 1-1 actions and in ball handling overall. This holds good for this event as well. The individual abilities of the players in offense are remarkable.

But on the other hand the appearance in terms of defense behavior was even more disappointing than 6 years ago. Starting from frontal basic position with hands rather low, a footwork that had been done decades ago, tackles centered to the body instead of being concentrated on the ball, approaches without tactical reserve of the fast retreat chance. Thus the cooperation in the group was at very low level as well. 6-0 was the dominating zone defense by far, ESP changed to a 5-1 for essential periods only, FAR played constant 5-1, and SWE used 4-2 under pressure in the last 5 minutes. The offense/defense switch of one player is standard, mainly the PM is taken, sometimes the left-handed RB.

That imbalance resulted in high-scoring games, spectacular for the audience but sometimes a drag for specialists to watch. This is surprising as handball is still a game that you win from the defense rather than from permanent shooting and a lot of contributions and presentations concerning high level defense play and how to develop it have been done in recent past.

The same applies to the play of the Goalkeepers (GK) as many of them were fast and good in the 1-1 situation but did not match that level when playing behind the set defense. They all were good in the outlet passing and direct shots on empty net and they were pretty quick in the switch with the court players. A setback could be registered in the savings from wing positions. Around 70% of wing scores were done to the short corner because of very stereotype kind of moves by the GK. There was a lack of creative reaction to the shooting from those positions in most of the teams.

A very positive trend to mention is the improvement of the turnover play of most of the teams. ESP, FRA, SRB and SWE pave the direction as the disappointing appearance of some teams in the bottom of the table was due to massive deficits in that respect. By this improvement the top teams managed to avoid makes from the FTO as well although most of the teams started respective attempts but most of them could be stopped by the fast back rush of the defending teams.

In case of a suspension all the teams brought the additional court player in a switch with the goalkeeper and used to play on in their usual offense-set-play. Here a positive thing has to be mentioned and underlined.

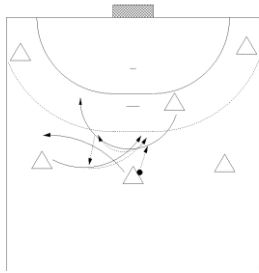
I have to say that in this M20 event defending was not good at all but fair and clean in almost all of the matches. If they improve their individual defense quality with keeping this line it seems a very good signal for the future. A significant point for the avoiding of suspensions can be seen in the fact that all the teams had clear concepts for the powerplay situation (mainly transitions to 4-2) that were pretty effective.

In terms of the play 7-6 only few attempts were registered. Some of the teams tried it for a short time only. This play obviously is not in the focus and the only team that tried to play it for longer time (POL vs. ESP) failed miserably. They conceded 9 makes on empty net, 6 of them back to back.

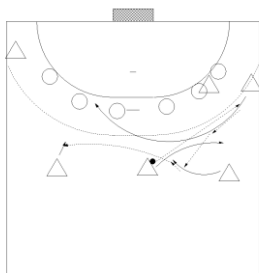
An interesting detail has to be mentioned concerning the quality and the discipline of shooting. ESP, POR and GER stand on an average of 16 unsuccessful shots per match, FRA numbers 18, SRB, DEN, and HUN 20/21. The only team falling out from this line is SWE with 27 unsuccessful shots, most of them by the two lefthanders in their team. It seems that this was the main reason for not gaining a medal as all their other figures are impressive.

Offense moves

Before we go to the teams in detail two moves in offense play are shown that were used by all of the teams.



This combination of pivot move with a crossing or an “empty” crossing was done by all of the teams as well as the following wing sweep with the positioning of the LP between #1 and #2 on the starting side.



After the general statements we will move to the respective teams one by one, starting from the gold medal winners and running down to rank 8.

Spain

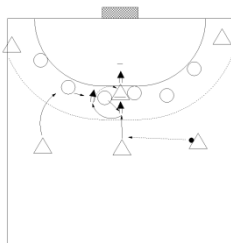
The Spanish team won the gold medal due to a brilliant performance in offense play, and they were very effective in terms of fastbreak and turnover play. To give the picture: in both encounters with runner-up POR they did not allow any fastbreak in the first 30 minutes of each game and in the end conceded 1 make in the first match and 2 in the final game only. The scores were 11 and 9 respectively. The second big advantage was their constant switch of players without losing quality, just as they do it in the senior’s team. All their right-handed backcourt players were able to fill every position in the backcourt and on the first line positions they had two players of equal quality in every spot. The same applies to the GK with two players splitting the playing time in half.

Total figures of the 4 matches observed

	ESP	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	63	69
scores	136	130
Fast-break goals /shots	30 / 42	15 / 23
Penalties g/s	18 / 24	12 / 12
suspensions	13	17
technical faults	35	33
rule violations	8	13

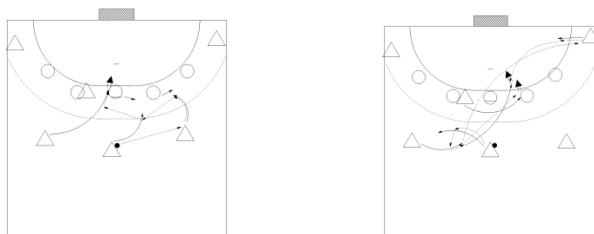
ESP used to play their traditional aggressive 6-0 with a switch to 5-1 (LW as point) after 20 minutes in the game approx. Funny enough they achieved the comeback-win in the gold medal match by a change to a close 6-0 on 8 meters only after POR had called for a TTO in minute 52 at 32-31 in their favor.

As already said they had a very good offense appearance with 3 right-handed players in the backcourt most of the time. Their weapons were GTMs most of the time with ground shots and 1-1 against throwing arm, many times followed by a bounced pass to the pivot.



This move is taken from the preliminaries vs HUN and is characteristic for their play. After receiving the ball from the RB, the PM will thrust straight and look for a direct ground shot because of a frontal position of the defender. If the defender will step to throwing arm to block this attempt, 1-1 against the arm will be started, followed by shooting or a bounced pass to the pivot.

Concept in 6-5



On the left you see the simple basic move, on the right side the variation is shown with the move of the LP followed by a diagonal pass to the pivot. After two makes the LP was marked closely so they chose a long diagonal pass to the RW and the extension to a "Kempa" RW-LB.

Portugal

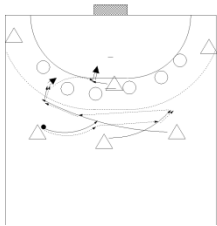
The team had a brilliant first pick in the backrow with the Mota da Costa brothers on RB and LB and Sousa as the PM. But when they were forced to substitute some of the three the quality of their play

decreased sharply. Due to this they did not go for fastbreaks (a total of 4/4 in the three matches observed only) to save energy and their turnover play was the worst of the main round teams by far. Their set-defense was a quite solid orthodox 6-0. The point said about the offense applies as well for the GKs, #38 Ferreira was better by far than his partner who seemed to be quite shaky.

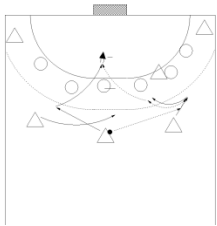
Total figures for the 3 matches observed

	POR	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	48	49
scores	96	96
Fast-break goals /shots	4 / 4	25 / 33
Penalties g/s	11 / 12	10 / 12
suspensions	12	15
technical faults	15	14
rule violations	9	9

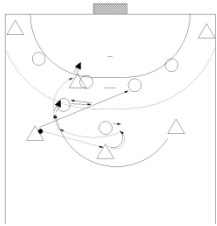
As already said their biggest deficiency was the fast game on both ends, on the other hand their technical level was outstanding as they had 5 ball mistakes and 3 rule infringements on average per match only.



As for their regular offense set-play they had a team move with long crossings in the backcourt ending with a shot of the backcourt player from the “wrong” side. Since they moved pretty fast and managed to pass the defender regularly the most favorite target was the far low corner and the percentage was pretty high in that.



A “Kempa” solution was executed by the PM from the position of LB with good effect. The PM Sousa chose his running lane according to the position of the second defender. Here the inside move is shown but he did the outside move with jump as well.



A variation of their basic move was played against a 5-1 formation of ESP with a transition to 4-2 by the LB. Both finishing options were taken.

Serbia

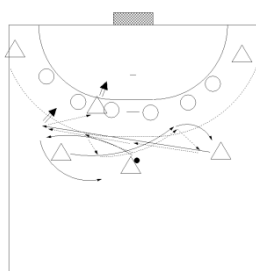
This was the team with the best defense performance of the tournament which is relative reminding the statements about the defense behavior in general. However their medal was a result of the defense effort. Their favorite set defense was a shallow 6-0, sometimes switched to a 6-0 with aggressive approach of the numbers 2 and 3 on non-ball-side. In this case they will switch defense positions between the regular OR and the BR. In the bronze medal match they picked a surprising 5-1 with the pivot playing the point until minute 37. After that they returned to 6-0. In the GK position Sevic (#91) was clearly better than his teammates.

Total figures for the 3 matches observed

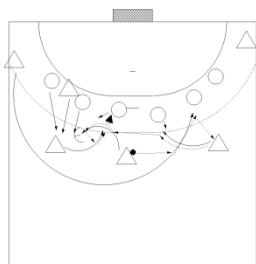
	SRB	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	64	75
scores	91	84
Fast-break goals /shots	11 / 13	17 / 24
Penalties g/s	3 / 6	10 / 16
suspensions	12	5
technical faults	25	34
rule violations	9	10

It has to be mentioned that the high figures in shooting are a result of two matches with SWE who lacked of playing discipline and offered a lot of ball gains by that.

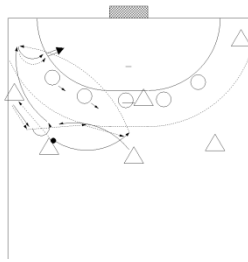
You will see by the graphics that most of their offense solutions were pretty complex moves and therefore vulnerable in terms of bad timing or interference by the defense by stop-fouls. This is the explanation for the low shooting rate of the team SRB in the other matches.



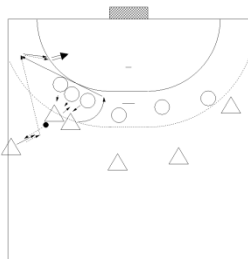
In the offense set-play the team showed the traditional “Balkan” move with double crossing in the backrow followed by a shot from the “wrong” side or a pass to the LP.



An interesting team solution was the long run of the LW to the other side and the block of the PM for the LB after a short cross.



In the powerplay besides the traditional double crossing they showed an adaptation of the “Swedish cross” with good success.



And they were one of only two teams demonstrating a good finishing solution for a free throw situation.

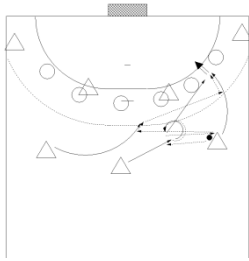
Sweden

The biggest problem of team SWE was that they had a lot of ball losses by bad shooting and from simple mistakes. Especially the two RB Palmar (#9) and Kammenhed (#8) had a lot of bad decision making in promising situations. So they were trailing in all the important matches (1-9 in the MR match with SRB after 12 min), in the semifinal and the bronze match 4-6 after 9minutes following an early lead.

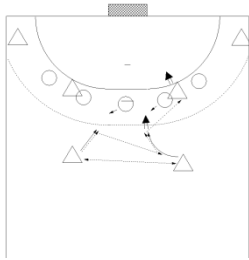
Total figures for the 3 matches observed

	SWE	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	81	59
scores	76	87
Fast-break goals /shots	16 / 20	11 / 13
Penalties g/s	6 / 10	5 / 9
suspensions	10	11
technical faults	25	19
rule violations	12	9

The table shows that SWE are the one and only team with a shooting percentage lower than 50%, this is a disaster, given that the opponents sum up for a percentage of 65%. Because of that deficit they switched from their regular 6-0 in Swedish style to 5-1, 5+1, and 4-2 even in the dying minutes of the matches, but without any remarkable result.



They showed a 7-6 offense set-play for some time with three pivots but again without little effect; this example shows the only score from that set-up.



The 6-5 concept was well rehearsed; unfortunately the RB took wrong decisions several times.

Hungary

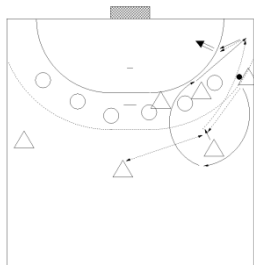
The main characteristic of the Team HUN was an aggressive defense and a switch from 6-0 to 5-1 with a specialist that switched with the respective near wing (#36 Tarnoki). By doing so the team achieved most ball errors of the opponents of all teams. 5-1 was played vs ESP from 18th and vs FRA from 23rd. In the second period 6-0 was played. In the match with GER they started with 5-1 up to min 22 and deployed it again for the final 10 minutes. Besides that Temesvari (#5) regularly substituted Janoskuti (#17) in defense play. Both GK had equal playing time and showed average performance each.

Total figures for the 3 matches observed

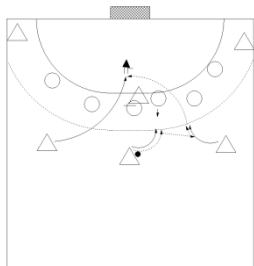
	HUN	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	59	48
scores	100	93
Fast-break goals /shots	18 / 27	16 / 19
Penalties g/s	4 / 7	8 / 12
suspensions	10	9
technical faults	22	39
rule violations	9	7

The figures show that HUN is a high scoring team with pretty fast and good turnover play. They managed to keep ESP as low as on 5 scores from fastbreak only in their encounter. On the other hand the 66% success of the shots from fastbreaks is a disaster, this is where the match with ESP was lost because they scored 4 goals out of 10 shots and they lost by 2 goals in the end.

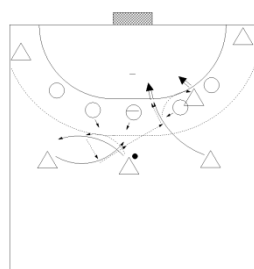
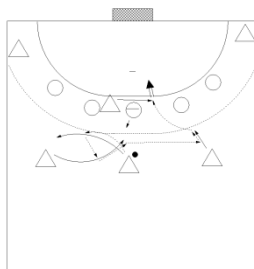
Most of the time they played the standard moves already mentioned in the offense set-play,



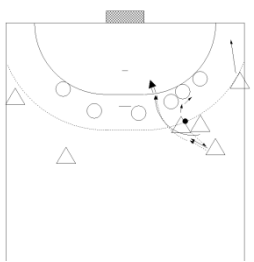
Sometimes they did an interesting extension of the sweep of the LW by combining it with a variation of the “Swedish crossing” of the RW.



Another common move was the “Kempa” RB-LB. Like with POR (already mentioned) the move was very well rehearsed and the jumping player was able to alter the running lane inside or outside.



According to the position of the LP their 6-5 concept had two different solutions at hand.



Finally, they were one of only two teams demonstrating a successful move from a free throw situation.

France

Looking at the figures of team FRA we must state that they were disappointing on both ends. They had the second lowest score, the highest number of ball losses and a very shaky defense with GKs that performed under average. The problems in defense are proven by the way they switched their zone defense. In all the matches they started with a 6-0 formation, vs GER they changed to a 5-1

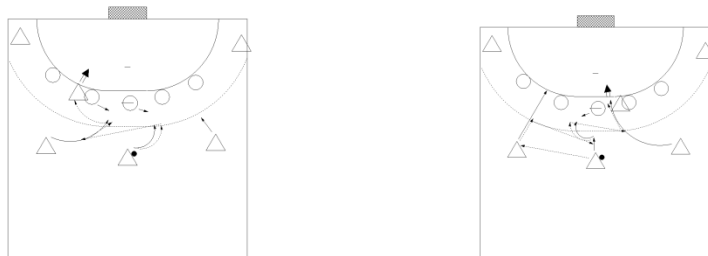
after 10 minutes, vs DEN they did so after 20 minutes, vs HUN they played 6-0 all first period. After the break they started in 6-0 again vs GER and DEN for just 10 minutes and played on in a 5-1 formation to the end. In the second period with HUN they played 5-1 with changing players on point position.

Total figures for the 3 matches observed

	FRA	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	53	67
scores	83	94
Fast-break goals /shots	11 / 15	10 / 13
Penalties g/s	9 / 14	10 / 13
suspensions	7	10
technical faults	28	10
rule violations	7	7

The table clearly shows that the best part of their game was the turnover play. The ball losses do hurt even more taking into account that 5 of them were done in fastbreak situations which means that all in all 9 fastbreaks were missed giving an average of 3 per match. This is a figure unacceptable in today's handball.

In offense set-play only the standard moves were shown, followed by 1-1 and continuation in parallel thrusting. The decision making of the PM #6 Fadhuile has to be rated disputable in many situations thus giving some strain to the set-play.



The positive thing was their 6-5 play which was pretty effective. They also had two solutions at hand determined by the position of the LP. The first one is a very simple one, the other with a transition to 4-2. Actually the second solution could be seen from many teams in one or the other version.

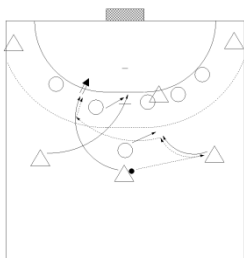
Germany

The performance of this team is hard to rate. Although beating two reckoned teams with FRA and DEN clearly they found themselves in the placement match for 7/8. The main reason was their loss in a low score game with SWE in the main round. The 25 goals they scored in this match were far below their average and it proves that in a tournament like that one lousy appearance can destroy all positive effort. All in all the team GER performed average with their well known 6-0 defense that they only changed into a 5+1 vs HUN in the powerplay situation. The defense specialist Wilhelm (#14) substituted the respective LB.

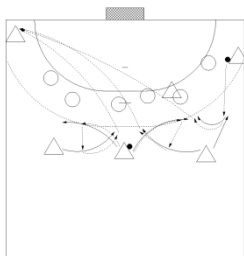
Total figures for the 3 matches observed

	GER	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	47	62
scores	96	89
Fast-break goals /shots	17 / 18	16 / 19
Penalties g/s	11 / 13	9 / 12
suspensions	9	9
technical faults	19	17
rule violations	10	9

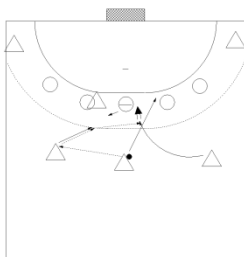
The figures show that the problem was not bad shooting as they have the best percentage in terms of shooting, especially in the fastbreak, the problem was the creating of scoring situations obviously.



In the set offense they used to play the afore mentioned standards but they had a nice solution against the French 5-1 with a transition to 4-2 from the LB and the CB penetrating after the diagonal pass from the RB.



Vs DEN they made use of the top scoring abilities of their LW Freihöfer (#2) for back-to-back scores after diagonal passes that followed after different initiating moves.



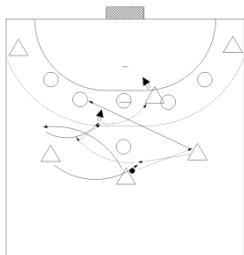
The 6-5 concept worked quite well, it is a traditional move seen in many teams in the past and it is still one of the most effective powerplay moves.

Denmark

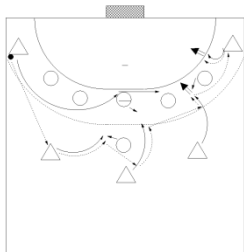
The Danish team was one of the disappointments of this EURO. From the starting upset defeat by the Faroe Islands they recovered with two wins and went to the main round as winner of their group. Their oscillating performance went on and they lost both a low score game vs POR as well as a high score game vs ESP. After that they were not able to stop the downswing and lost the cross match with FRA and the placement encounter with GER. In defense DEN stood in a 6-0 with an inconsistent switch of their defense specialist substituting either the PM or the RB. In the final 5 minutes vs FAR they picked 5+1, vs GER they chose a 5-1 formation. In the offense play they had big troubles to create scoring chances explaining their low scores despite of a good shooting percentage of some 60%. The best part of their game was the fastbreak and the turnover play. And they had the lowest rate of ball handling mistakes, 9 in total over 3 matches. This is an outstanding score.

Total figures for the 3 matches observed

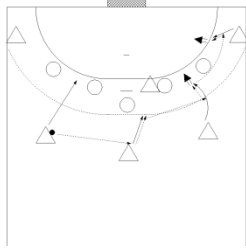
	DEN	Opponents
unsuccessful shots	64	42
scores	84	92
Fast-break goals /shots	17 / 19	12 / 17
Penalties g/s	11 / 13	10 / 13
suspensions	13	12
technical faults	9	12
rule violations	10	12



Apart from the regular moves shown by all the teams they had a clear concept against 5-1 with a diagonal transition to 4-2 from LB and RB. They applied it from either side.



Also played from either side was a wing sweep with penetration by the BR or BL respectively.



The powerplay concept was pretty good against a 4-1 set as well as vs 5-0. The move of the backrow players is very much the same like in the wing sweep concept shown above.

Faroe Islands

Let me have a few words on the appearance of the team from the Faroe Islands. They played a very fast and creative kind of handball. Their 5-1 defense was one of the most refreshing pieces of the event. They had a terrific back row with three players of highest “playability” skills. The Mittun brothers Pauli and Oli together with Ellefsen a Skipagotu are a match to the backcourt squad of any of the top nations. Their assists behind the back or behind the head to wings and line players were finest skills in the offense. In defense the team had more troubles because of bad basic education like all the teams but their goalkeeper Pauli Jacobsen stood excellent in 1-1 situations and kept them alive.

The reason why they did not make it among the first 8 was just their lack of substitutes. The bench players could not match the standard of the others, the wing players were a little shaky overall. So the main load had to be carried by too few shoulders to achieve the smashing surprise but their appearance was extremely impressive.

If this nation manages to develop a deeper squad close to the level of their 4 or 5 top players then this will be a team to be watched in the nearest future. There is no doubt that those players mentioned have to be called rising stars.

Summary

Some points were very **positive** with all of the teams. The physical shape of all the players was at very high level. That leads to fast games with high speed moves in offense and some very good turnover play. The technical level of the players in individual play in offense is excellent; all the goalkeepers are capable of scoring at empty net and executing top outlet passing.

Other points are on top level with some teams whereas some teams are weak in that respect. Here are to mention fastbreak (top ESP, SWE, GER, DEN – very weak POR) and turnover play (top FRA and ESP – pretty bad SRB and POR). Another aspect is shooting discipline (good in most teams – disastrous with SWE) and ball handling (top DEN – lousy FRA). FTO was initiated by many teams as an integrated part of the offense tactics, due to good turnover play not always effective.

A positive development seems to take place concerning the application of the TTO, quite a few use performance related TTO now, although the bigger number still seems to stick with result based TTO requests. Anyhow, a 0-6 streak should not happen to a coach in the second period of a gold medal game, but it’s always easier from the stands...

The negative points have already been mentioned: very bad individual appearance in defense in all terms. Slow and antique footwork with sidestepping and frontal shuffling, man orientation instead of ball orientation was registered in all the teams. Due to this deficiencies there is a big lack in group cooperation in defense, the same applies to the cooperation with the GK that has to be rated not existent. In general there was surprisingly weak performance of the GKs against shots from the wing positions.

Thanks for your attention