



WOMEN'S HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP
EHF EURO 2010
DENMARK // NORWAY // 07-19 DECEMBER

Women's European Championship 2010

Qualitative analysis



Index

| | | |
|---|------|----|
| Introduction | Page | 3 |
| Statistics and perspectives | - | 4 |
| The Goalkeepers | - | 11 |
| The Defence | - | 14 |
| The Fast Break and the Fast retreat | - | 21 |
| The Attack | - | 27 |
| Majority and Minority | - | 34 |
| Conclusions and final remarks | - | 39 |

Introduction

The 9th Women's European Handball Championship took place from the 7th to the 19th December 2010. For the first time the responsibility of organising the Championship was shared by two host nations: Norway and Denmark.

Having two nations organising the event was a kind of an experiment - with a very successful outcome, EHF-president, Tor Lian, afterwards stated.

The competition was organised in five venues: Larvik and Lillehammer (NOR) and Aarhus, Aalborg and Herning (DEN). The preliminary round was played in the two Norwegian venues as well as in Aarhus and Aalborg. The main round matches were played in Lillehammer and Herning and the finals took place in Herning.

The EURO 2010 attracted a huge crowd of spectators. A new record was set as over 220,000 people watched the matches live across the five venues. The final matches were played in a sold-out MCH Arena in Herning with 12,500 spectators.

The event achieved some of the best television viewing figures to date, setting new records in both Norway and Denmark and excellent TV ratings in many other nations, particularly Sweden and Romania following the success in the championship of these teams.

Also the numbers of visitors of the official website of the event (650,000) indicates that the women's handball is indeed 'alive and kicking'.

The responsibility of executing this qualitative analysis was also shared by the two host nations.

Observations were made in Larvik and Lillehammer by the Norwegian squad: Paal Oldrup Jensen, Tore Johannessen and Kari Aagaard, and in Denmark by the Danish squad: Lars Frederiksen, Ole Damgaard and Ulrik Joergensen.

Afterwards Lars Frederiksen and Ole Damgaard have analysed the multiple data, identifying trends and team characteristics.

The analysis was finally edited by Ulrik Joergensen.

Statistics and perspectives



Euro 2010 Ranking

| | | | |
|-----|--|-----|-------------|
| 1. |  | NOR | Norway |
| 2. |  | SWE | Sweden |
| 3. |  | ROU | Romania |
| 4. |  | DEN | Denmark |
| 5. |  | FRA | France |
| 6. |  | MNE | Montenegro |
| 7. |  | RUS | Russia |
| 8. |  | NED | Netherlands |
| 9. |  | CRO | Croatia |
| 10. |  | HUN | Hungary |
| 11. |  | ESP | Spain |
| 12. |  | UKR | Ukraine |
| 13. |  | GER | Germany |
| 14. |  | SRB | Serbia |
| 15. |  | ISL | Iceland |
| 16. |  | SLO | Slovenia |

Table 1: The official ranking of the EURO 2010

For the fourth consecutive time Norway won the Women’s European Championship – an impressive achievement.

And had it not been for their Swedish neighbours the summary would have been that at this championship there was Norway and the others. Except for the two matches against Sweden the EURO 2010 champions won all matches by 10 goals or more.

Norway was quite sovereign and won the EURO 2010 without much difficulty. Only the unexpected loss against Sweden in the main round showed that it is possible to shake the Norwegians.

By this victory Norway consolidated the position as the all time Women’s EURO top nation.

Rankings at the latest Women’s European Championships.

| Ranking | Denmark 2002 | Hungary 2004 | Sweden 2006 | FYRO Macedonia 2008 | Denmark/Norway 2010 |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | DEN | NOR | NOR | NOR | NOR |
| 2 | NOR | DEN | RUS | ESP | SWE |
| 3 | FRA | HUN | FRA | RUS | ROU |
| 4 | RUS | RUS | GER | GER | DEN |
| 5 | HUN | GER | HUN | ROU | FRA |
| 6 | YUG | UKR | SWE | CRO | MNE |
| 7 | ROU | ROU | CRO | MKD | RUS |
| 8 | CZE | ESP | POL | HUN | NED |
| 9 | AUT | SLO | ESP | SWE | CRO |
| 10 | SLO | AUT | AUT | UKR | HUN |
| 11 | GER | FRA | DEN | DEN | ESP |
| 12 | UKR | SCG | MKD | BLR | UKR |
| 13 | ESP | CRO | UKR | SRB | GER |
| 14 | NED | SWE | SRB | FRA | SRB |
| 15 | SWE | CZE | NED | AUT | ISL |
| 16 | BLR | BLR | SLO | POR | SLO |

Table 2: Rankings at the Women’s European Championships 2002 - 2010

Looking backwards at the recent championships it is difficult to identify any other stability than at the absolute top where Norway is reigning.

In 2010 Sweden copied the achievement of Spain two years earlier by transforming a 9th place at the previous championship into a silver medal. This was for sure unexpected by the most.

Romania finally redeemed the potential by winning the nation’s first medal at a Women’s European Championship.

Former medallists Denmark and France returned to the top, while Germany failed and went downwards in the ranking.

Montenegro became the most successful newcomer since France entered the scene of the European Championship in 2000.

Match dynamics (all 47 matches)

| | Draw | 1 - 2 | 3 - 5 | 6 - 9 | 10 and + |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Preliminary Round | 0 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 8 |
| Main Round | 0 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Final Round | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 0 | 12 | 12 | 9 | 14 |

Table 3: Numbers of matches won by different intervals of goals.

All though it was the general impression that the teams are closing in on each other (except from Norway) it is interesting to observe than none of the 47 matches at the EURO 2010 ended with a draw and that half of the matches was won by a relatively large margin.

If you look into the results you will find that 40 of the 47 matches were won by the team which also was in the lead at half time.

Only Sweden (against Germany and Hungary) and Montenegro (against Russia and Denmark) managed to turn a match around where they were two or more goals behind at half time.

Data of the players

| | Height | Weight | Age |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| CRO | 1.80 | 72 | 25.38 |
| DEN | 0* | 0* | 25.75 |
| ESP | 1.75 | 69 | 26.50 |
| FRA | 1.77 | 70 | 23.19 |
| GER | 1.78 | 0* | 26.81 |
| HUN | 1.77 | 70 | 25.50 |
| ISL | 1.74 | 70 | 24.06 |
| MNE | 1.78 | 69 | 23.94 |
| NED | 1.74 | 69 | 24.13 |
| NOR | 1.76 | 0* | 25.94 |
| ROU | 1.76 | 69 | 27.63 |
| RUS | 1.80 | 71 | 23.00 |
| SLO | 1.76 | 69 | 23.38 |
| SRB | 1.77 | 70 | 26.25 |
| SWE | 1.77 | 72 | 25.56 |
| UKR | 1.78 | 69 | 24,69 |
| Average | 1.77 | 69.92 | 25.11 |

Table 4: Average height, weight and age of the players on each team.

* No information available

The average height and weight of the players were almost similar with the corresponding numbers of the previous championships.

This is also the case with the average age.

However, the parameters age and experience are worth investigating a little more thoroughly. To give a proper picture of the eventual importance of these parameters you must look at the significant players – not the players sitting on ‘the outer seats of the bench’.

The chosen method is to include the eight players on each team, who played most time during the EURO 2010.

Age and International Matches – The Top 12 teams

| | Age | IM |
|-----|-------|--------|
| NOR | 27,00 | 119,75 |
| SWE | 27,25 | 87,38 |
| ROU | 27,38 | 125,00 |
| DEN | 26,00 | 77,75 |
| FRA | 24,88 | 65,75 |
| MNE | 24,75 | |
| RUS | 23,13 | 46,25 |
| NED | 25,13 | 101,25 |
| CRO | 25,50 | 86,38 |
| HUN | 26,00 | 92,50 |
| ESP | 27,50 | 80,88 |
| UKR | 25,25 | 58,50 |

Table 5: Average age and average number of international matches for the eight Players on each top 12 team, who played most time during the EURO 2010. Information about international matches was taken from the official programme of the EURO 2010. No information was available concerning MNE.

The three medal winning nations are all among the four teams with the highest average age. Among these only Spain failed to go into the semi-finals.

Romania tops the IM-ranking. European Champions Norway is runner up in this ranking and Sweden takes the fifth spot.

Based on the results of the EURO 2010 it would be in order to say that age and experience matters.

Bearing this in mind we will sum up and look at some perspectives.

The chance for the other nations to push Norway away from the throne might be that the Norwegians now also seem to face the challenge of having to substitute some of the older players. Five of the players from the Norwegian team already passed ‘the 30-year-border’. Norway has to consider how to avoid being caught in the same trap as the successful Swedish men’s team did ten years ago.

Russia ought to be one of the challengers in the future. Russia was the EURO 2010 participant with the lowest average age. Even though the team included a group of reigning world

champions it was obvious that the team lacked some experience and the performance of the team was quite uneven.

It will be fair to have big expectations for the Russian team in a few years when the players have gained some more experience.

France also presented a young team and seems to have managed the generation change quite well. The old stars (Nicolas, Wendling, Pequeux-Rolland a.o.) have been successfully substituted by younger players and the prosperity for the French team appears to be promising.

At the EURO 2010 France – once again – were slow starters, but the team won the five last matches of the tournament finishing 5th.

Denmark has also successfully integrated some younger players in the team – especially players from 'the golden year' 1988. This fact and the advantage of playing on home ground lifted the Danish team to a high level of performance in the preliminary and main round. In the final weekend the team seemed a little tired and perhaps stressed by the expectations from the home spectators and had to settle with the 4th place.

Montenegro proved to be a strong newcomer. A lot of the players are quite young and will undoubtedly improve, but very much will depend on the presence of the outstanding Popovic.

Croatia was the only Top 12-team with no significant player (eight players with most TP) over 30 years. All the Croatian keys players will probably still be going strong in two years time. So perhaps Croatia can follow the examples of Spain and Sweden. However, they have to improve in certain areas of the game.

It will also be interesting to follow Netherlands on home ground in 2012. Some of their key players will have 'the right' age and experience at that time and they will be supported by a bunch of young, talented and enthusiastic players. We saw examples of this already at the EURO 2010.

Romania presented the oldest squad at the EURO 2010, but we must not forget that the dominant player in the Romanian team, Neagu, is only 22 years. So even though they probably have to replace some players they will still have to be counted for.

Sweden took the silver medals at the EURO 2010. The Swedish team was very well organized and played solid during the whole tournament. In addition to this some of the key players like Torstenson and Gullmén delivered fantastic individual performances.

The core of the Swedish team consists of players in their late 20's. If they stay together for the next couple of years Sweden will still be a tough team to beat, but the EURO 2010 might have been the peak for the Scandinavians.

Spain was not quite able to follow up upon their good results from the previous championships. They played some close matches but ended out losing most of them. Perhaps a Begona Fernandez at full strength would have been enough for a couple of victories more for

the Iberians. Anyway Spain presented a new rising star in Pena, who was selected for the All Star Team.

Hungary started out well in the tournament, but after being massacred by Norway in the third preliminary match the team never seemed to recover. In the end the 10th place must be regarded as a bit below the expectations. It is a little hard to tell in which direction the arrow points for the Hungarians after this.

The same applies for Germany after the unexpected early exit and for the German's conquerors from Ukraine, who also came out of the EURO 2010 quite badly.

The Goalkeepers



The EURO 2010 was an excellent tournament for the goalkeepers.

The total number of goals at this championship was 2290. The corresponding numbers from the latest championships were 2500 in Macedonia in 2008 and 2510 in Sweden in 2006.

When we look at the statistics it is evident that the goalkeepers to some extent must be given credit for this development.

Ten of the twelve best teams in the EURO 2010 were also among the top 12 teams in the EURO 2008.

A comparison shows that seven of these ten teams improved their goalkeeper performances (measured by save percentage) from 2008 to 2010 (marked by green colour).

| | EURO 10 | | | | | EURO 08 | | | | |
|------------|---------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|---------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|
| | Save % | Shots | Shots/match | Saves | Saves/match | Save % | Shots | Shots/match | Saves | Saves/match |
| NOR | 46 | 269 | 33.6 | 123 | 15.4 | 43 | 294 | 36.8 | 125 | 15.6 |
| SWE | 39 | 290 | 36.3 | 114 | 14.3 | 39 | 221 | 36.8 | 86 | 14.3 |
| ROU | 40 | 328 | 41 | 131 | 16.4 | 36 | 310 | 44.3 | 111 | 15.9 |
| DEN | 40 | 290 | 36.3 | 115 | 14.4 | 33 | 239 | 39.8 | 79 | 13.2 |
| FRA | 43 | 267 | 38.1 | 114 | 16.3 | 37 | 131 | 43.7 | 48 | 16 |
| MNE | 35 | 262 | 37.4 | 93 | 13.3 | | | | | |
| RUS | 40 | 242 | 40.3 | 97 | 16.2 | 42 | 317 | 39.6 | 134 | 16.8 |
| NED | 35 | 222 | 37 | 77 | 12.8 | | | | | |
| CRO | 36 | 259 | 43.2 | 92 | 15.3 | 32 | 308 | 44 | 100 | 14.3 |
| HUN | 38 | 237 | 39.5 | 90 | 15 | 30 | 228 | 38 | 68 | 11.3 |
| ESP | 36 | 221 | 36.8 | 79 | 13.2 | 34 | 297 | 37.1 | 100 | 12.5 |
| UKR | 31 | 246 | 41 | 76 | 12.7 | 32 | 253 | 42.2 | 81 | 13.5 |

Table 6: Shots, saves and save % for the top 12 teams of the EURO 2010 and the corresponding numbers for the same nations from the EURO 2008.

Only RUS and UKR have a minor decrease in the save percentage, while the goalkeepers from SWE performed at the same level at the two championships.

The table also shows that eight out of these ten teams received fewer shots at their goals (in average) at the EURO 2010 compared to the EURO 2008 (marked by blue colour).

This indicates improved defence play and means that the goalkeepers in general had fewer shots to save, but raised their save percentage anyway.

The top goalkeepers of the EURO 2010

| Goalkeeper | | EURO 10 | EURO 08 |
|------------|-----|---------|---------|
| Haraldsen | NOR | 47 | 47 |
| Leynaud | FRA | 44 | 38 |
| Grimsbø | NOR | 42 | 33 |
| Tolnai | ROU | 42 | |
| Sidorova | RUS | 42 | |
| Grubbström | SWE | 42 | |
| Mortensen | DEN | 41 | 33 |
| Navarro | ESP | 39 | |
| Palinger | HUN | 39 | 28 |

Table 7: The top goalkeepers of the EURO 2010 measured by save %. For comparison their save % at the EURO 2008 is also shown.

As the table shows goalkeepers from several nations performed at high level, some of them even despite of the fact that their team did not have the most successful tournament.

It is interesting to note, that the goalkeepers who also participated in EURO 2008 all managed to raise their save percentage considerably at the EURO 2010. Haraldsen, NOR is the only exception. She 'only' maintained her impressive save percentage of 47.

Another indication of the high level of goalkeeper performances is the fact that in 16 out of 17 matches between the top 8 teams you find goalkeepers performing with save percentages above 40. The only exception is the main round match DEN – MNE.

Some of the best goalkeepers showed great skills in saving shots from the distance (9M shots). Haraldsen, NOR actually saved 70 % of the distance shots during the championship, but also Palinger, HUN (65 %), Sidorova, RUS (62 %) and Leynaud, FRA (60 %) did extremely well in this discipline.

At the Men's EURO 2010 in Austria Szmal (POL) performed with the highest rate of saves from the distance saving 52 % of the 9M shots. So compared to the men's competition the 9M save percentages of the best female goalkeepers are quite high.

It is also notable that Mortensen, DEN performed extremely well saving wing shots with a save percentage from the wing positions of 60.

It was not possible to identify new styles or techniques in the goalkeeper play during the tournament. However, it was clear that the best goalkeepers work with a consistent strategy in positioning and cooperation with the defence and that this might be the explanation of the overall strong performances of the goalkeepers.

The Defence



As already mentioned in the previous passage the EURO 2010 was a tournament with fewer goals than usually.

This could have been an effect of a lower number of attacks during the championship, but the statistics make it clear that this not the case. The total number of attacks noted at the EURO 2010 (5886) was higher than at the EURO 2008 (5849), while the total score was 210 goals lower.

The general impression from the observations of the matches of the EURO 2010 was that many of the teams performed very well in defence and that it often was quite difficult for the attacking team to make goals in the six against six situations, when the defence was back and organized.

The statistics make it easy to argue that the best defending teams were also the most successful at the championship.

| | Goals rec. | GR/match | Shots | SR/match | Steals | St/match | Blocks | Bl/match |
|------------|------------|----------|-------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| NOR | 146 | 18.25 | 269 | 33.6 | 63 | 7.9 | 39 | 4.9 |
| SWE | 176 | 22 | 290 | 36.3 | 47 | 5.9 | 43 | 4.1 |
| ROU | 197 | 24.63 | 328 | 41 | 39 | 4.9 | 27 | 3.4 |
| DEN | 175 | 21.88 | 290 | 36.3 | 48 | 6 | 18 | 2.3 |
| FRA | 153 | 21.86 | 267 | 38.1 | 35 | 5 | 22 | 3.1 |
| MNE | 169 | 24.14 | 262 | 37.4 | 37 | 5.3 | 18 | 2.6 |
| RUS | 145 | 24.17 | 242 | 40.3 | 36 | 6 | 22 | 3.7 |
| NED | 145 | 24.17 | 222 | 37 | 33 | 5.5 | 11 | 1.8 |
| CRO | 167 | 27.83 | 259 | 43.2 | 28 | 4.7 | 24 | 4 |
| HUN | 147 | 24.5 | 237 | 39.5 | 42 | 7 | 17 | 2.8 |
| ESP | 142 | 23.67 | 221 | 36.8 | 32 | 5.3 | 9 | 1.5 |
| UKR | 170 | 28.33 | 246 | 41 | 35 | 5.8 | 13 | 2.2 |

Table 8: Goals and shots received, steals and blocks for the top 12 teams of the EURO 2010.

Norway is simply the best team on all the four parameters: Goals received, shots received, steals and blocks. When you add to this, that the Norwegians also had the best goalkeeper performance no one can be surprised that the Scandinavians ended up as champions. It is outstanding that the team in average only received 18.25 goals per match.

However, when the task is to evaluate the quality of the organized defence play, you must subtract the goals and shots from the fast break phase. This somewhat changes the picture.

| | Goals received | | Shots received | |
|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Total | Avg. per match | Total | Avg. per match |
| NOR | 133 | 16.63 | 251 | 31.4 |
| SWE | 149 | 18.63 | 255 | 31,9 |
| ROU | 160 | 20 | 285 | 35.6 |
| DEN | 158 | 19.75 | 269 | 33.6 |
| FRA | 131 | 18.71 | 239 | 34.1 |
| MNE | 145 | 20.71 | 233 | 33.3 |
| RUS | 122 | 20.33 | 214 | 35.7 |
| NED | 113 | 18.83 | 183 | 30.5 |
| CRO | 131 | 21.83 | 216 | 36 |
| HUN | 114 | 19 | 187 | 31.2 |
| ESP | 121 | 20.17 | 192 | 32 |
| UKR | 129 | 21.5 | 199 | 33.2 |

Table 9: Goals and shots received in organized defence for the top 12 teams of the EURO 2010.

The table shows that Norway and Sweden - the two finalists - are the two teams, which have received the lowest numbers of goals in average in organized defence. This of course indicates good performances from the defences and the goalkeepers.

When you look at the numbers of shots received in organized defence you will see, that Netherlands and Hungary was the most successful in preventing the opponent to have shots on their goals. NOR and SWE follow in this ranking.

All four teams played in Main Round group II. This group contained three teams (HUN, UKR and NED), which all had some difficulties scoring goals. It is open for discussion if the low numbers of shots received by the four teams topping this ranking are caused by good defending or poor attacking by the opponents. It might be a combination.

We must also note that Netherlands and Hungary allowed the opponents to have quite a lot of fast break opportunities. This will most likely reduce the number of organized defence situations and thereby the possibility of receiving shots.

Suspensions

The general impression of a championship dominated by high quality defence play is supported by the suspension statistics. The total number of suspensions at the EURO 2010 was 257. At the EURO 2008 the total number of suspensions was 299.

The combination of fewer goals and fewer suspensions indicates that the defence skills of the players have been improved.

| | Total | Average/match |
|-----|-------|---------------|
| NOR | 11 | 1.4 |
| ROU | 13 | 1.6 |
| FRA | 14 | 2 |
| DEN | 17 | 2.1 |
| UKR | 13 | 2.2 |
| SLO | 8 | 2.7 |
| SRB | 8 | 2.7 |
| SWE | 22 | 2.8 |
| CRO | 18 | 3 |
| MNE | 22 | 3.1 |
| RUS | 19 | 3.2 |
| ESP | 20 | 3.3 |
| GER | 10 | 3.3 |
| NED | 21 | 3.5 |
| ISL | 11 | 3.7 |
| HUN | 30 | 5 |

Table 10: Suspension distribution.

Once again Norway tops the ranking being the team with the least suspensions – in average 1.4 suspensions per match.

The top 4 teams in this suspension ranking are among the five best teams in the final ranking of the championship, which suggests that avoiding suspensions contributed to a good result.

Hungary is quite different from the rest by receiving in average 5 suspensions per match. No doubt that this was a clear disadvantage for the Hungarians who in the end had to settle with the 9th place.

Characteristics of some of the top teams

Norway played a classical 6:0 defence with physically strong and very experienced players in the central defence (Larsen, Hammerseng and Frafjord, who all were among the individual top defenders of the EURO 2010 according to the official statistics).

By virtue of years of cooperation and great anticipation they managed to make a lot of steals when the opponents tried to pass to the lineplayers. The steals were often converted into a goal by a fast break.

[1: Video Norway defence](#)

The tables also reveal that a strong defence performance was a key factor for the Swedish team to reach the final. **Sweden** also played a traditional 6:0 defence with good movement, intensity and a lot of tackles.

2: Video Sweden defence

It goes for Sweden as well, that the central defence is built up by experienced and physically strong players (Torstensson, Wiberg and Flognman), who have been playing together in the national team for some years.

Good defending also applied for **Denmark**, the third Scandinavian team to go through to the final matches.

The Danish 6:0 defence was improved by the return of the experienced players Melgaard and Skov. It was noted that good work from the wing defenders allowed the team to make the central defence compact and aggressive.

On the other hand **Romania** proved that it was possible to go through to the finals without performing especially well in defence. The team apparently chose to rely very much on the physical strength and the height of the players and played a rather passive version of the 6:0 defence.

However, Romania went out and played more aggressively in the bronze medal match against Denmark, making it difficult for the opponents to gain the necessary speed and rhythm in their attack play. This proved to be a decisive factor for the result of this match and might be the way to go for the Romanians in the future.

This might also be the advice for **Croatia**. The team from Balkan was the one among the top 12 teams that allowed the opponents to have the most shots at their goal and at the same time the team that was least successful in stealing the ball, which indicates that the Croats perhaps were a little too reactive in their defence work.

As mentioned above **Netherlands** performed well in organized defence being the team with the lowest average number of shots at their own goal.

The Dutch team compensated for their lack of physically strong players by a lot of movement and energy in their 6:0 defence.

Visser was a key player as a very offensive central defender, who often went forward practically changing the defence system into 5:1.

3: Video Netherlands defence

Hungary also defended well measured by the number of shots received. However, the Hungarian team apparently sometimes acted a little too eagerly, which resulted in a high number of suspensions and 7 meters for the opponents.

Russia is ranked quite high on the parameters steals and blocks, but the overall performance of the Russian defence play was not impressive. Obviously the Russian team lacked some more experienced central defenders.

Defence systems

As described above the top teams of the EURO 2010 all played the 6:0 defence system and almost nothing else.

In fact the 6:0 was the primary defence system of all the participating team except from the team from **Slovenia**, which played 3:2:1 most of the time.

[4: Video Slovenia defence](#)

Some teams played more offensive variations of the 6:0 system.

The example of the Netherlands is already mentioned.

Ukraine practiced a variation of 6:0 with offensive defenders on the back positions.

[5: Video Ukraine defence](#)

Some teams used other defence systems than 6:0 for shorter periods as tactical means.

France – also this time – played 4:2 and 5:1

[6: Video France 4:2 defence](#)

[7: Video France 5:1 defence](#)

Hungary also used the 5:1 defence system for some periods.

[8: Video Hungary 5:1 defence](#)

Active wing defenders

It was a trend that more teams played with very active wing defenders. The best wings managed to cover a bigger area and to stress the built up play of the opponents. Often they were able to make game stops or to cause technical faults by the opponents to win the ball.

[9: Video active wing defence](#)

When the active wings and the back defenders cooperated well they mostly were successful in these actions, but you also saw teams attempting this defence behaviour failing because of bad timing and lack of cooperation.

Some of the active wing defenders (Kuznetcova, RUS – Verten, HUN – Dembele, FRA – Radicevic, MNE a.o.) showed great skills in stealing the ball.

The Fast Break and the Fast Retreat



Before the EURO 2010 the analysis squad predicted that the ability of making fast break goals and at the same time preventing the opponents to succeed in this aspect of the game would be extremely important.

Because of this assumption it was decided to focus specifically on this aspect and to make detailed observations during the championship.

In order to be able to obtain more detailed information than what is available in the official statistics the squad made its own statistics in this area.

It was decided to note fast break actions in four different phases:

Phase 1 FB: 1:0 and 2:1

10: Video Norway FB phase 1 I

11: Video Norway FB phase 1 II

12: Video Ukraine FB phase 1

13: Video Denmark FB phase 1

Phase 2 FB: 3:2 ... 6:6 unorganized defence

14: Video Sweden FB phase 2

15: Video Netherlands FB phase 2

[16: Video Slovenia FB Phase 2](#)

[17: Video Hungary FB phase 2](#)

Phase 3 FB: 6:5 and 6:6 attacking team maintaining the pressure on the defence

[18: Video Norway FB phase 3](#)

[19: Video Netherlands FB phase 3](#)

[20: Video France FB phase 3](#)

Phase 4 FB: Fast throw off

No video examples.

It was also decided to consider the FB successful if at least one of the following positive events for the attacking team was the result:

- Goal
- 7 meter
- Suspension for an opponent

The reason for this was that the analysis squad wanted to discover if it was beneficial for the teams to give priority to fast breaks – not only in the meaning of scoring goals.

Afterwards only matches considered being of importance for both teams have been included in the statistics.

As an example the Main Round match DEN – MNE is not included because DEN already was qualified for the semi-finals.

Also uneven matches from the Preliminary Round have been left out.

The match NOR – SLO is an example of this.

| | Matches | FB for | | FB against | | Difference | |
|------------|---------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | | Number of reg. matches | Total positive events | Pos. events avg. per match | Total negative events | Neg. events avg. per match | Total |
| NOR | 7 | 73 | 10.4 | 30 | 4.3 | 43 | 6.1 |
| DEN | 7 | 69 | 9.9 | 41 | 5.9 | 28 | 4 |
| SWE | 8 | 51 | 6.4 | 42 | 5.3 | 9 | 1.1 |
| NED | 6 | 51 | 8.5 | 45 | 7.5 | 6 | 1 |
| ESP | 5 | 33 | 6.6 | 29 | 5.8 | 4 | 0.8 |
| RUS | 4 | 30 | 7.5 | 27 | 6.8 | 3 | 0.8 |
| FRA | 5 | 38 | 7.6 | 38 | 7.6 | 0 | 0 |
| ROU | 7 | 51 | 7.3 | 55 | 7.9 | -4 | -0.6 |
| CRO | 4 | 27 | 6.8 | 34 | 8.5 | -7 | -1.8 |
| UKR | 6 | 49 | 8.2 | 58 | 9.7 | -9 | -1.5 |
| GER | 3 | 25 | 8.3 | 36 | 12 | -11 | -3.7 |
| MNE | 4 | 16 | 4 | 32 | 8 | -16 | -4 |
| HUN | 5 | 26 | 5.2 | 53 | 10.6 | -27 | -5.4 |

Table 11: Fast break statistics by analysis squad including fast break for and against all top 12 teams.

Once again you find the European Champions from Norway topping the statistics. Co-host Denmark is second and these two teams have considerably better statistics in the fast break subject than the others. In average NOR has a surplus of 6.1 positive events. The similar rate for DEN is 4.

NOR and DEN are the two teams with the highest numbers of positive events in fast breaks. Both teams give high priority to the fast break phase and also have goalkeepers with great skills in starting fast breaks and performing long throw-outs. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the Danish goalkeeper Mortensen actually is credited for 15 assists in the official assist statistics.

[21: Video Denmark phase 1 FB I](#)

22: Video Denmark phase 1 FB II

The silver medallists from Sweden are ranked 3rd in the fast break statistics. They gain this position mostly by being strong in preventing the opponents to score fast break goals against them being fast in retreat.

In fact the ability of preventing the opponents to score fast break goals seems to be a key factor for the successful teams of the EURO 2010.

Most of the teams have decent rates when it comes to average positive events in the fast break attacks but you see more scattering in the rates when it comes to the fast retreat.

NOR – no surprise – is the strongest team in preventing fast break goals for the opponents. Also SWE and DEN have good rates and these rates would have been even better if the teams had not been run over by the Norwegian fast break machine in the final matches:

| |
|--|
| Match fast break statistics (numbers of positive events): |
|--|

| |
|------------------------------|
| Semi-final: NOR – DEN 12 – 6 |
|------------------------------|

| |
|-------------------------|
| Final: NOR – SWE 10 – 1 |
|-------------------------|

High discipline, determination in the retreat as well as patient and low-risk play in organized attack might be some explanations for the successful prevention of receiving fast breaks goals of the Scandinavian teams.

23: Video Denmark fast retreat

24: Video Norway fast retreat

Romania is the only team in Top 4 with a negative fast break statistics. However, if you exclude the match ROU – DEN from the preliminary round (2 – 13 in numbers of positive events) you will see that also ROU has a quite fine fast break statistics.

The fast break rates also point out what could be one of the reasons for the early exit of the German team. Germany in average allowed the opponents to have 12 positive fast break events in each match.

The four FB phases

The fast break statistics of the analysis squad does not imply any specific information about the distribution of the fast breaks in the four phases mentioned above.

The impression is that the teams mostly put their effort in trying to benefit from good opportunities in phase 1 fast breaks.

This is supported by the fact that the most fast break goals are made by the wing players - Herrem, NOR being the top scorer with 17 FB goals. Also the wings from DEN and FRA put in a lot of goals on fast breaks.

Other teams – especially Russia, Netherlands and to some extent Sweden – tried to bring the whole team forward in the fast breaks. This led to a higher share of fast break goals by the back court players scored in phase 2 or phase 3.

Only a few teams – Netherlands and the newcomers from Iceland – tried to benefit from phase 4, the fast throw-offs. Evidently both teams lacked some distance shooters and were at the same time physically inferior in most of their matches. They tried to compensate for this by attempting to put pressure on the opponents before they had time to reorganize the defence after scoring.

Russia and a few other teams also carried out the fast throw-offs as a tactical mean in some periods of some matches.

It was surprisingly noted, that no teams seemed to try to punish teams which substituted one or two players from attack to defence by performing fast throw-offs. Only NOR seemed to have that in mind in the semi-final against DEN.

The Attack



As mentioned in earlier chapters the EURO 2010 was a championship with few goals.

It has been noted that the performances of the goalkeepers were improved and that more teams also played very well in defence.

The comparison of the shooting statistics from EURO 2010 and EURO 2008 gives support to this impression.

| | | 2010 | 2008 |
|------------------------|------------|--------|--------|
| 6 Meter Central | Shots | 402 | 485 |
| | Goals | 269 | 356 |
| | Efficiency | 66.9 % | 73.4 % |
| Wing | Shots | 625 | 625 |
| | Goals | 285 | 340 |
| | Efficiency | 45.6 % | 54.4 % |
| Break Through | Shots | 410 | 312 |
| | Goals | 262 | 231 |
| | Efficiency | 63.9 % | 74.0 % |
| 9 Meter | Shots | 1750 | 1771 |
| | Goals | 571 | 597 |
| | Efficiency | 32.6 % | 33.7 % |

Table 12: organized attack: Shots, goals and average efficiency rates from four different positions. Comparison EURO 2010 and EURO 2008. Only the Top 12 teams from both championships are included in this statistic.

Efficiency in organized attack

The table above shows that the shooting efficiency rates were lower in all four categories at the EURO 2010 compared with 2008. However, the difference by the 9 Meter shots is very small and not significant.

It is remarkable that the efficiency rates by all types of near shots were considerably lower at the EURO 2010 than two years earlier. This again indicates strong goalkeeper performances but might also be a result of tactically smart defence play where you open certain areas and put maximum pressure on the shooter without making faults. The higher number of BT-shots could be an indicator of this.

On the other hand the numbers clearly suggest that the female players need to improve their jumping and shooting abilities in order to be able to master more shooting variations. It also implies that better decision making – when, how and where to shoot – is necessary.

The lower shooting efficiency rates do not necessarily mean that the quality of the attack play was lower than at the previous championships but it will be fair to say that it was possible to observe more improvement in the defence play than in the attack play at this championship.

There is certain logic to this as most coaches would agree that it takes longer time and more work to improve the attack play than to improve the defence play. More comments on this will follow after the presentation of the general efficiency of the teams in organized attack.

| | Shots in organized attack | Total goals in organized attack | Average goals in organized attack | Efficiency in organized attack |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| NOR | 327 | 174 | 21,8 | 53.2% |
| SWE | 365 | 172 | 21,5 | 47.1% |
| ROU | 365 | 170 | 21,3 | 46.6% |
| DEN | 322 | 148 | 18,5 | 46.0% |
| FRA | 291 | 128 | 18,3 | 44.0% |
| MNE | 318 | 156 | 22,3 | 49.1% |
| RUS | 258 | 119 | 19,8 | 46.1% |
| NED | 241 | 110 | 18,3 | 45.6% |
| CRO | 272 | 138 | 23 | 50.7% |
| HUN | 265 | 102 | 17 | 38.5% |
| ESP | 246 | 121 | 20,2 | 49.2% |
| UKR | 245 | 106 | 17,7 | 43.3% |

Table 13: Shots and goals in organized attack for the top 12 teams. Goals on fast break and 7M are subtracted from the total number of goals.

Some of the most successful teams in organized attack are teams with a larger group of players from one club team. This is the case for Norway (Larvik), Montenegro (Buducnost), Spain (Itxako) and Romania (Oltchim Valcea).

There is no doubt that it was an advantage for these teams to have players with a well developed mutual understanding, which makes it possible for the team to benefit from (group) tactical means used in the club team.

You might also add Croatia to this group of teams as a big share of the Croatian players play or used to play together in the same club (Podravka).

Dominant players

It was also notable that more of the successful teams in organized attack had strong individualists who played a major role in the organized attack of their teams – and demonstrated shooting abilities that made them able to score goals without much preparation or assistance from the rest of the team.

Neagu (ROU), Popovic (MNE) and Torstenson (SWE) all belonged to this category of dominant players, who scored a lot of goals and at the same time were credited for a large number of assists.

[25: Video Cristina Neagu assist](#)

Another outstanding individual performance at the EURO 2010 was shown by the Norwegian line player Heidi Løke. By scoring 40 goals and being extremely efficient in shooting and at the same time receiving 14 penalties Løke made a decisive contribution to the Norwegian triumph.

The role of the wings

It was a trend at the EURO 2010 that more teams used their wings more actively in the preparation for good shooting opportunities.

Some teams let their wings bring the ball across of the court crossing with a back court player and afterwards going inside to be a second line player.

Other teams let the wing player go inside as second line player followed by crossing moves by the back court players.

A lot of variations of transitions from the wing players combined with crossing were used. Some examples are presented below.

[26: Netherlands wing transition](#)

[27: Norway wing transition](#)

[28: Sweden wing transition](#)

29: Slovenia wing transition

Perhaps this ‘new role’ affected the wing players in a negative way and took some focus away from their role as finishers from the wing positions. Anyhow, as shown above the efficiency rate of the wing shots was only 45.6 % at the EURO 2010 compared with 54.4 at the EURO 2008.

In 2008 four wing players were among the ten over all top scorers in the championship. At the EURO 2010 no wing player managed to get into Top 10.

| | | Wing goals Avr./match | Wing shots efficiency |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Manaharova | UKR | 1.8 | 69 % |
| Wiel Fredén | SWE | 1.75 | 48 % |
| Radicevic | MNE | 1.57 | 61 % |
| Martin | ESP | 1.5 | 35 % |
| Hilster | NED | 1.5 | 56 % |
| Kuznetsova | RUS | 1.33 | 73 % |
| Kviesgaard | DEN | 1.25 | 71 % |
| Ardean Elisei | ROU | 1.25 | 22 % |
| Borschchenko | UKR | 1.17 | 78 % |
| Bont | NED | 1.17 | 44 % |

Table 14: Most scoring players from the wing position in organized attack – ranked by average number of wing goals per match.

The table underlines that the wing players did not make many goals in organized attack at the EURO 2010.

Ranked by the number of wing goals in average per match Manaharova (UKR) tops the list with an average of 1.8 goals per match.

At the EURO 2008 Todorovska (MKD) had the highest wing goal average: 3.0 goals per match.

You also find huge variations in the individual efficiency rates among the wing goals top scorers. For some improvement is indeed possible.

| | Goals | Shots | Efficiency |
|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| NOR | 17 | 45 | 37.8 % |
| SWE | 36 | 77 | 46.8 % |
| ROU | 22 | 57 | 38.6 % |
| DEN | 21 | 51 | 41.2 % |
| FRA | 25 | 46 | 54.3 % |
| MNE | 31 | 60 | 51.7 % |
| RUS | 20 | 40 | 50.0 % |
| NED | 21 | 44 | 47.7 % |
| CRO | 32 | 62 | 51.6 % |
| HUN | 16 | 45 | 35.6 % |
| ESP | 19 | 58 | 32.8 % |
| UKR | 25 | 40 | 62.5 % |
| Total | 285 | 625 | 45.6 % |

Table 15: Wing goals, wing shots and wing shot efficiency in total for the top 12 teams of the EURO 2010.

The efficiency of the wing players in organized attack at the EURO 2010 was not impressive. But in the big picture this does not seem to have that much importance. None of the four top teams were especially efficient in shooting from the wing positions. And Ukraine, which was the most efficient team from the wings, finished 12th.

30: Ukraine wing goal

Based on the EURO 2010 you might say that the trend is that the wing players are more important in the fast break phase than in organized attack.

Characteristics of some of the top teams

Norway was the team with the highest efficiency in organized attack. The Norwegian team is experienced and the players know each other well. The Norwegian players were able to play with high speed and maintain pressure on the opponents defence over several consecutive passes and hereby creating opportunities for half distance shots or for the strong line players, Løke and Frafjord.

Sweden was very well organized in attack. The silver medallist played very patiently and secure and was the team with the lowest rate of turn overs and technical faults. Often initiated by the long distance shooting threat from Torstenson the Swedes skilfully used the whole width of the court and managed to create spaces for break throughs or wing shots being the team with the highest number of shots from each of these two ‘positions’. Beside Torstenson the young playmaker Gullén was the key player in the Swedish attack.

During some periods of the games **Romania** played some of the fastest, most powerful and attractive handball at the EURO 2010. In other periods too much responsibility was handed over to the high-level performing Neagu, who was the absolutely dominant player in the Romanian attack. When this happened it was too predictable for the opponents that they 'only' had to look out for Neagu and the other strong Romanian asset: The line players Stanca and Manea.

Directed by Popovic **Montenegro** also played quite well and efficiently in organized attack. The team had the highest rate of goals and the highest efficiency rate from 9 M. Evidently the team lacked some quality on the line player position.

Croatia was the team with the highest average rate of goals in organized attack (23 goals per match in average) and the second highest efficiency rate. The team was well balanced with a strong player on left back (Penezic) as well as on right back (Horvat). This made it possible for the Croatians to play some nice, symmetric crossing combinations – at its best a pleasure to watch.

Majority and Minority



As mentioned earlier there were quite few suspensions at the EURO 2010 and thereby few periods of majority or minority.

This means that the quality of these aspects of the game was not as important as the analysis squad actually expected before the championship.

The following table gives a picture of how the participating teams performed playing with at least one player more or less on the court.

| Nation | Majority | | | Minority | | | Total |
|--------|----------|--------|---------|----------|--------|---------|-------|
| | Number | Result | Average | Number | Result | Average | |
| NOR | 20 | 17-4 | + 0.65 | 8 | 5-6 | - 0.13 | + 12 |
| GER | 13 | 13-4 | + 0.69 | 10 | 2-6 | - 0.4 | + 5 |
| DEN | 13 | 12-6 | + 0.46 | 10 | 7-8 | - 0.1 | + 5 |
| MNE | 13 | 17-7 | + 0.76 | 19 | 13-18 | - 0.26 | + 5 |
| ROU | 13 | 15-6 | + 0.69 | 10 | 3-8 | - 0.5 | + 4 |
| RUS | 17 | 26-11 | + 0.88 | 16 | 9-21 | - 0.75 | + 3 |
| FRA | 19 | 14-7 | + 0.36 | 12 | 8-14 | - 0.5 | + 1 |
| SLO | 9 | 9-5 | + 0.44 | 7 | 4-8 | - 0.57 | 0 |
| UKR | 16 | 16-10 | + 0.37 | 14 | 2-8 | - 0.42 | 0 |
| NED | 13 | 13-2 | + 0.84 | 19 | 6-17 | - 0.57 | 0 |
| SWE | 13 | 13-4 | + 0.69 | 18 | 5-14 | - 0.5 | 0 |
| SRB | 9 | 6-4 | + 0.22 | 5 | 3-5 | - 0.4 | 0 |
| ISL | 7 | 7-4 | + 0.42 | 6 | 3-6 | - 0.5 | 0 |
| ESP | 14 | 14-2 | + 0.85 | 19 | 10-24 | - 0.73 | - 2 |
| CRO | 18 | 18-16 | + 0.11 | 19 | 9-24 | - 0.78 | - 13 |
| HUN | 13 | 12-5 | + 0.53 | 30 | 9-34 | - 0.83 | - 18 |

Table 16: Majority and minority: Total numbers and results of periods in majority/minority for all participating teams. All matches in Preliminary and Main Round are included.

As you see Norway was the team with the best total result of periods in majority and minority. No surprise since Norway was the team with the highest number of periods in majority and at the same time – measured by average per match – also the team with the lowest rate of minority periods.

On the other end of the scale you find Hungary. The Hungarians were involved in 43 periods of majority/minority losing these by 18 goals in total. No wonder when the team not only had to deal with the highest number of minority periods but at the same time also showed the worst minority performance by losing each period by 0.83 goals in average.

It is notable that Montenegro came out with a total result of +5 goals even though the team played six periods more in minority than in majority.

In contrast France had a surplus of seven periods in majority but only came out with +1 goal in total.

Russia was the team with the highest total number and average rate of goals in majority. Measured by average the Russians were the strongest in the discipline of playing in majority at the EURO 2010, but at the same time they put up the weakest minority defence and collected 1.31 goals in average in each minority period. So what the Russian team gained in majority it lost in minority.

Netherlands and Spain were also efficient in majority, but for Spain it was almost the same story as for Russia. The Spaniards were actually over all best in defending in majority but like the Russians they had defensive problems in minority and collected 1.26 goals in average in these periods.

However, Croatia was by far the team with the weakest over all performance in periods of majority/minority. The statistics show that the Croatians had the weakest majority defence and allowed the opponents to score in average 0.89 goals in periods of Croatian majority. The defence was also the weak point for Croatia in minority resulting in a defeat of 0.78 goals in average in these periods.

The result was that Croatia lost the periods of majority/minority by 13 goals in total, even though the team only had a surplus of one period in minority.

Denmark and Norway managed almost not to give anything away in periods of minority. They only lost their minority periods (DEN: 10 and NOR: 8) by one goal in total.

Majority attack

No new trends were identified in the way the teams attacked in majority. Typically the teams tried to create 3 against 2 situations in either side of the court. Often this was initiated by the playmaker crossing with the left or right back or simply by trying to draw the defence to one side creating space for an optimal situation on the other side of the court.

The successful attacks were often finished by a line player or a wing player.

Some examples are shown here:

[31: Montenegro majority attack](#)

[32: Norway majority attack](#)

33: Romania majority attack

34: Germany majority attack

35: Hungary majority attack

36: Netherlands majority attack

37: Slovenia majority attack

38: Sweden majority attack

Minority attack

In minority the responsibility was often handed over to back court players and the goals came through long distance shots or break throughs.

Some examples:

[39: Germany minority attack](#)

[40: Sweden minority attack](#)

[41: France minority attack](#)

[42: Hungary minority attack](#)

[43: Netherlands minority attack](#)

[44: Slovenia minority attack](#)

[45: Ukraine minority attack](#)

Conclusions and final remarks

If someone without any knowledge of handball was handed over the statistics of the EURO 2010 and was asked to find out who were the champions it would probably not be difficult for the concerned to find the right answer.

Norway was simply the best team on practically all statistical parameters.

- the best goalkeeper save percentage
- the lowest numbers of shots and goals received per match
- the highest numbers of steals and blocks per match
- the lowest number of suspensions in average per match
- the highest number of fast break goals in total
- the highest number of goals in total
- the highest efficiency rate in organized attack
- the over all best team in majority/minority

The other teams indeed have some catching up to do. Hard work or perhaps new strategies are requested. Or perhaps the retirement of some of the older Norwegian players will make everything more even.

The goalkeepers have developed their strategies and positioning and are now excessively challenging the shooters. Especially when it comes to the near shots the shooters will have to develop their jumping and shooting abilities as well as their decision making.

Also the back court players will have to develop a diversity of tools. Fast, dynamic and skilful players are requested.

In women's handball it seems to be increasingly difficult to create good shooting opportunities playing six against six. Perhaps other strategies or tactical means must be tested by the coaches.

At the same time this means that the ability to carry out fast breaks and prevent the opponent from succeeding in this still has a growing importance.

The quality of the play and the matches on the second consecutive playing days was observed to be considerably lower during the EURO 2010. Unfortunately this was especially the case on the final day where none of the four teams were any near their top level.

In order to create high quality matches on the final day it is our recommendation to put in a rest day between the day of the semi-finals and the final day.

As mentioned the teams in general seem to be closing in on each other. In addition a lot of talented young players are breaking through.

There is every indication that the EURO 2012 in Netherlands is going to be an exciting event.