



Competitions Conference

18–20th April 2008 • Vienna, Austria

Dragan Skrbic – keynote speech

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you all, I am very honoured to be here. As a representative of the players, I believe this opportunity was given to me, because you sincerely want to hear my opinion about the topics that concern European handball players.

I and many other players from the top leagues in Spain, Germany and France think that there are too many matches every year. This is an issue that needs to be resolved. In order to reach valid, long term solutions, we need to involve the players in the decision-making process. It is important that players are actually involved in every decision concerning the players.

If we look to the national calendar:

- The national team competitions need to be played over a longer period of time (in Norway – 8 matches in 11 days) – instead a timeframe of 16/17 days
- The competition calendar for the next season is very tight due to the qualifications; this is in addition to the large number of national team friendly matches. Perhaps it would be possible for the number of played matches to be reduced
- As a result of the competition calendar, the players have no guarantee that they will receive a 4-week holiday period

As players, we enjoy taking part in the World Championships, European Championships and the Olympic Games. These competitions represent an opportunity that the players do not want to miss out on. However, if a player gets injured, then of course the clubs should be compensated in this instance.

One question to be considered carefully is how can we get the players more rest? It has become necessary to change the competition format and the calendar. Other possibilities include:

- looking at the number of matches, as mentioned previously, in addition to taking into consideration how we are training in the periods between the matches
- Pay more attention to the individual player with the physical training to prevent injuries or big strains. Does the player have to practise handball every day of the week or should they run and work-out focusing on tactical areas instead of just practising handball?

We have to solve the problems between the clubs and the national teams, in regards to whether players are actually allowed to play for the national teams. Perhaps it is necessary for the number of teams in the national leagues to be reconsidered.



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To reiterate, it is very important to involve all stakeholders in the decision-making process in regards to the competitions calendar. We need to bring common sense to the table in order to create a global vision. When each stakeholder sets their competitions without taking the competitions of the other stakeholders into consideration, then the result is chaos, of which we can expect in the 2008/2009 season.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Jean Brihault for thinking about the players after their handball career has come to an end – it is one of the main considerations of the players at this time - I was a nice surprise to hear about this side of handball. Nevertheless, I kindly ask you all to remember that the players are the most important part of this picture, for without the players there are no matches!