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VISIONS IN HANDBALL – “Visions for the 3rd decade”, proposals for the workshop and the discussion during the 2001 Lecturers’ Seminar.

1. General consideration about zone defence systems:

In the past zone defence systems could be divided into deep – aggressive and shallow - less aggressive defence systems.

In modern game of handball, every defence system tends to be very aggressive.

This means that the initial formation of the players in a certain defence system does not prejudice the level of aggressiveness. For example: 6:0 zone defence can be very aggressive and deep in spite of the initial position of the defenders. Players can act even deeper and with greater aggressiveness as it was common in some classic deep zone defence systems (3:2:1 or 3:3). At the same time this zone defence system attempts to keep also the density of the defence, especially at the centre of the court (that was characteristically even before).

On the other side deep zone systems beside the deepness want to provide greater density especially at the centre.

So both types of zone systems want to keep traditional advantages and to improve some traditional weaknesses.

These goals players can achieve especially with:

- a lot of run (different technique),
- with excellent mastering of special defence guard (parallel and diagonal),
- with as many body contacts as possible (even hard one),
- with a good sense for intercepting the ball and anticipation,
- and finally with excellent collaboration among all players (help by stopping a penetration or a shot, hand over and take-over of the attackers, counting the attackers and properly chosen attacker against whom one must act, etc).

Further development of above mentioned skills is expected in the future.

All above mentioned facts create a necessity for a modern defender who can act very aggressive and active, independent in which zone defence system he must play.

So the basic education of the young players must provide this type of habits and knowledge.

That creates also a necessity for the special methodical approach. According to the modern – aggressive type of zone defence systems, the methodology of teaching and training needs to be adapted accordingly and has to base on the correct long-term development of players from the youngest age onwards.

Through the game of mini handball and the individual defence game the young players obtain knowledge and practice, which will help in future modern zone defence game.

Later, the defence knowledge needs to be developed through exercises, enabling a large degree of freedom for defenders in solving the individual situations.

In these exercises, defenders have to choose between different possibilities according to the development of game situation.

Generally, players have to know and respect the rules of classic zone defence which they perform, but at the same time need to be creative enough and capable of improvisation.

Recognising the purpose of attacking players is a key idea of such type of defence.

2.Zone defence 6:0:

Traditional way of performing zone defence 6:0 followed the rules of **act – react** defence philosophy (attackers **act** and defenders try to find the solution how to **react** properly). With a development of offence tactical and technical skills such strategy become insufficient. As a consequence in recent years an aggressive type of defence zone system 6:0 is becoming more popular. In this way defenders attempt to neutralize some of the disadvantages of this type of zone system:

- insufficient depth of defence,
- too much space for shooting from distance,
- and too much manoeuvring space for various attacking combinations.

Consequently, defenders use aggressive, sudden and predatory work (anticipating the development of the attacking combination) in attempt to break the combination systems of attackers. Defenders mainly try to prevent clear receptions of the ball whilst the attackers are in fast run, as they could continue with the shoot on the goal or a pass to the best positioned team player. As a result, defenders do not allow the attackers to develop a classic combination game, appropriate for the attack against the defence zone system 6:0. Therefore, attackers need to improvise more and they are more exposed to technical and tactical errors and attempt shots from unclear positions.

During the defence acting first and second defenders often find themselves numerically inferior – 1 defender against 2 attackers, thus risking a lot, however, they also force attackers into risk.

Basic (traditional) counting of players by which defenders distribute their responsibility toward a certain attackers could be abandon in a certain situation. For example second

defender can take-over the responsibility toward a CB to surprise him and interrupt his idea how to continue his attacking action.

Such game demands a lot of knowledge and experience from the defenders, while they must be able to assess the chances of the opposite players for the progression of the attack.

As a result of these facts, it can be said that the zone defence system 6:0 changed considerably in time and nowadays guarantees more depth and aggressiveness as it used to in past. Also in the future we can expect development in this way.

3.Zone defence 3:2:1

This defence system loses a lot of its users in the last years. There are very few top level teams which play this zone defence properly by the rules created in the past. In many cases it's adapted for the play against a certain opponent and it became often very similar to the 5:1 defence. Sometimes it's even difficult to distinguish between these two systems.

It's valid especially for the performance of first line players which act in a very variety way. Sometimes they act very deep toward attacker and sometimes they remain on the line particularly when the P is on his side.

The very special problem of this defence formation is the transformation of attack in a play with two pivots. Even when one of the attackers simply runs in that create great problems. In that case defenders have to change a little bit their motion and tasks if they want to keep the efficiency of defence. Collaboration among defenders has to be excellent, especially by guarding pivot players. The players can remain in the basic positions with a slight changes (traditional way – so called correct playing 3:2:1 defence) or they can switch to 4:2 or 5+1 defence. In the future development players will be able to play this type of defence even more adapted to the certain opponent – mixed with the characteristic of other defences.

I think that in spite of this fact it will survive in its original way especially as an educational step (or tool) in long-term development (teaching and training process) of players in young age categories (particular in the period between 15 and 21 years). By the top-level senior teams competition it'll be even more adept to the certain circumstances. It'll share the rules of acting with 5:1 defence. So the similarity between these two zone defences will be even greater in the future.

4.Fast-break

As the percentage of goals from fast attacks is ever increasing, a development of this type of attack from various defence systems has become an important part of handball. Rapid development of the fast attack game in the recent years has happened due to the fact that fast attack is the easiest and quickest way to reach a good goal-scoring position. In the future fast attack should become a starting point for every attack in modern handball. In the recent years, a so-called "extended fast attack" has developed as an intermediary phase between the fast attack and the attack against the set zone or combined defence formation. As a result of rule changes, related to the throw-off after received goal, fast attack occurs also after the received goal.

Appropriate training in the execution of fast-break serves as a basis for improving the players' conditioning as well as their technical and tactical knowledge in difficult circumstances. It is recommended that the coach prepare a selection of different exercises aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of all activities important for all possibilities of fast-break (also after receiving a goal – fast execution of throw-off). The exercises must be structured in such a way as to enable the tactical adaptation of players to concrete circumstances occurring at the moment of a fast break and quick throw-off.

Fast attack can take several shapes and it'll remain the same also in the future:

- Fast attack with an “escape” of one or two defenders even before it is clear that the defence has won the ball;
- Team (group or team) fast attack which requires:
 - Precise diagram of leaving of the playing positions in defence,
 - Exact system of movement across the length and width of the playing field, which has to be also well-timed between all the players (spatial balance across the whole of the playing field),
 - Set concept of the extended fast attack, which can be adapted to the situation according to the particulars of the opponent's return into the zone defence.

As in every phase of the game, also in fast attack (including fast execution of throw-off) the players should have a lot of knowledge and practice a good degree of teamwork – in the future is expected improvement in this field.

Coaches have to consider above-mentioned facts when teaching and training the fast attack. Goalkeeper's role in initial phase of fast break is very important and it'll even increase – first pass is many times decisive for the successful execution of the whole fast break. GK must follow some rules when performs a throw-in of the ball:

- execute a throw-in as quickly as possible,
- a good overview of the whole playing field and needs to assess the chances to perform a pass to different team players, depending on their position (opening-up) and their possibilities for appropriate continuation of the game,
- inside the goal area, he needs to attain such position, which will allow him to have a good overview of the entire playing field and control of the execution of his throw-in. He needs to stand far enough from the goal-area line, so an opposite player cannot block his view of the field or even intercept the pass,
- goalkeeper has to know tactical possibilities of the fast attack. Naturally, first possibility is a long pass to those players (wings or pivot), standing the furthest away, who could end the fast attack on their own after receiving the ball. Such a pass has to be controlled; the positions of returning players and the eventual movements of the opposite goalkeeper (leaving his area to intercept the ball) need to be considered. A good judgement between the risk of performing such a pass and its rationality depending on the positions in the field is required.

Developing such skills by the GK will be one of the most important future tasks of coaches.

5.attack and defence in numerical superiority and inferiority

Having a numerical inferiority or superiority in the game of handball (a player more or less on the field) is very important for both attacking and defending teams. This has also been confirmed by statistical data from the last major international competitions. In average teams perform a nearly a quarter of all attacks in numerical inferiority or superiority.

Undoubtedly, the coaches and players in training do not allocate adequate time for solving of these particular situations.

Defending with a player less

Defence game with a player less has become very efficient in the last years as a result of aggressive and anticipation in the game of defence players, which undermines the initiative of attacking players. At the same time, defence players have psychological advantage over the attacking players, who play under the pressure of expectations. Attacking players often do not risk too much and they like to shoot only from well-prepared positions. On the other hand, defending players aim to prevent the creation of such opportunities with the aggressive and deep game, which they use to obstruct prepared combinations of attacking players. Setting these so-called traps gives the defenders, who are numerically inferior, a chance to be successful against the attacking players. Defenders have to move constantly and quickly forward and backward; they also need to help each other and surprise the attackers with feints – i.e. showing the movement towards the middle of court and move back etc.

We can expect further development in this direction.

Defending with a player more

Some coaches tend to change the tactic from zone into combined defence when having a player more on the field. In certain circumstances this move can be successful; nevertheless, it is generally better to maintain the system, which teams use usually - zone defence. But in the future both strategies will be develop particularly for the surprise.

Attack with a player more

The advantage of having a player more in attack is quite considerable from tactical point of view, however, when considering some other factors – mainly psychological ones – the advantage is not as big as could be expected.

The majority of quality teams attempt to follow a certain concept when playing with a player more; this concept is usually related to the position of the attacking pivot player.

It has been previously mentioned that teams can defend with a very aggressive game, thus stopping the classic attacking combinations with a player more. Attackers can deal with such situations in various ways. We can expect a development toward strategies with two pivots an

on the other hand very fast execution of some standard combinations where pivots position and blockade is essential.

Attack with a player less

Certain tactical principles have to be followed when attacking with a player less. It is particularly important that the attackers in their game look for the possibilities to create such situations, where there are equal in or have a higher number of players on some part of the field. Wing or/and backs run towards the goal area line can help this if they are performed suddenly or inside some particular combination. It is also important that opportunities are created for the most dangerous attackers, as defenders wish to cut them off the game.

It is a fact that the majority of training time is being used for practicing the situations, when the teams are equal in numbers. As a result of this lack of appropriate training (less practising), players often have difficulties with solving such specific situations, which have a decisive impact onto the final match result. It is not only the percentage of time played in these situations throughout the match, but also their importance for the rest of the match. Namely, these situations are sometimes **called breaking or turning points of the match.**

- It is necessary to include more exercises, teaching the players how to solve the situations of numerical inferiority or superiority in both the attack and defence, into the methodology of learning and training.