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Title: Offence tactics with a player more in handball

Introduction

Playing with one player less or more on the court is a very important factor in a handball match with regard to both defence and offence. This could be confirmed by data acquired in important international competitions such as ECh's. The data in the tables below illustrate the importance of that portion of a game played by an unbalanced number of players on the court.

Table 1: Number of offences and goals with one player more or less on the court at the European Championships from 2002 to 2010.

European Championship	No. of offences by the team with a player more per match	No. of goals by the team with a player more per match	No. of offences by the team with a player less per match	No. of goals by the team with a player less per match
EC 2002	7.95	4.47	6.15	2.34
EC 2004	9.43	5.54	7.35	2.60
EC 2006	8.70	5.16	6.72	2.81
EC 2008	7.74	4.71	5.85	2.32
EC 2010	7.82	4.76	5.84	2.94

European Championship 2010 in Austria			
Team	No. of matches	2-minute exclusions	Average exclusion time (min.)
AUSTRIA	6	33	11
CROATIA	8	32	8
CZECH REP.	6	26	8.6
DENMARK	7	33	9.4
SPAIN	7	28	8
FRANCE	8	17	4.3



GERMANY	6	20	6.7
HUNGARY	3	20	13.3
ICELAND	8	39	9.8
NORWAY	6	26	8.7
POLAND	8	35	8.8
RUSSIA	6	33	11
SLOVENIA	6	27	9
SERBIA	3	18	12
SWEDEN	3	16	10.7
UKRAINE	3	15	10
TOTAL	94	418	8.9

Table 2: Average number and average time of exclusions per team and per match at the EChs 2010 in Austria.

European Championship 2010 in Austria				
Team	No. of matches	Total no. of goals/offences	Goals/offences with one player more	Goals/offences with one player less
AUSTRIA	6	184/346 (53%)	27/39 (69%)	21/44 (48%)
CROATIA	8	207/397 (52%)	44/67 (66%)	17/36(47%)
CZECH R.	6	175/358(49%)	26/38(68%)	15/35(43%)
DENMARK	7	198/371(53%)	35/52(67%)	14/36(39%)
SPAIN	7	213/394(54%)	30/58(52%)	19/40(48%)
FRANCE	8	225/451(50%)	41/63(65%)	11/24(46%)
GERMANY	6	157/339(46%)	26/44(59%)	12/29(41%)
HUNGARY	3	80/169(47%)	11/22(50%)	9/27(33%)
ICELAND	8	249/459(54%)	48/77(62%)	20/45(44%)
NORWAY	6	169/347(49%)	36/58(62%)	15/30(50%)



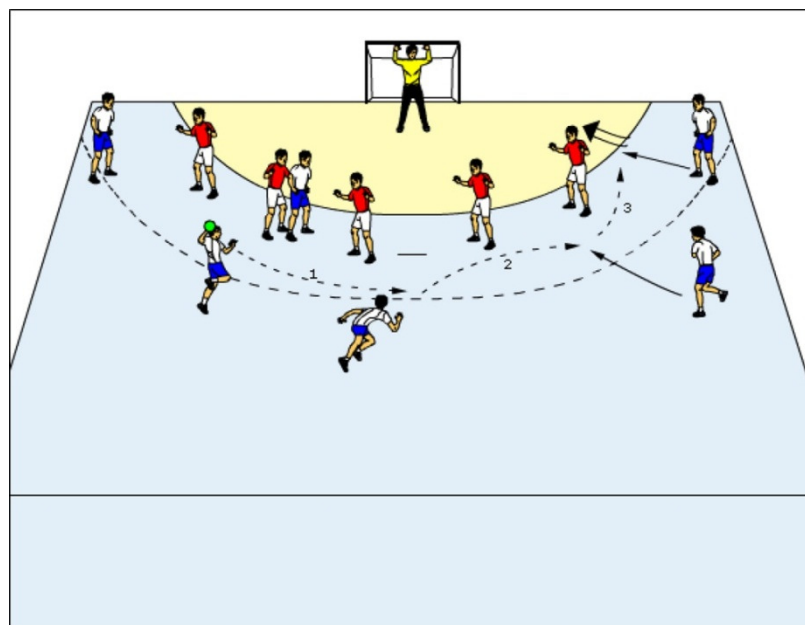
POLAND	8	222/463(48%)	32/63(51%)	13/46(28%)
RUSSIA	6	177/354(50%)	28/48(58%)	25/46(54%)
SLOVENIA	6	186/381(49%)	28/41(68%)	15/39(38%)
SERBIA	3	83/161(52%)	9/18(50%)	13/27(48%)
SWEDEN	3	78/170(46%)	15/24(63%)	9/24(38%)
UKRAINE	3	87/181(48%)	11/23(48%)	6/21(29%)
TOTAL	94	2690/5341(50%)	447/735(61%)	234/549(43%)

Table 3: Total number of offences, number of offences with one player more or less and the efficiency of completed offence types at the EC 2010 in Austria.

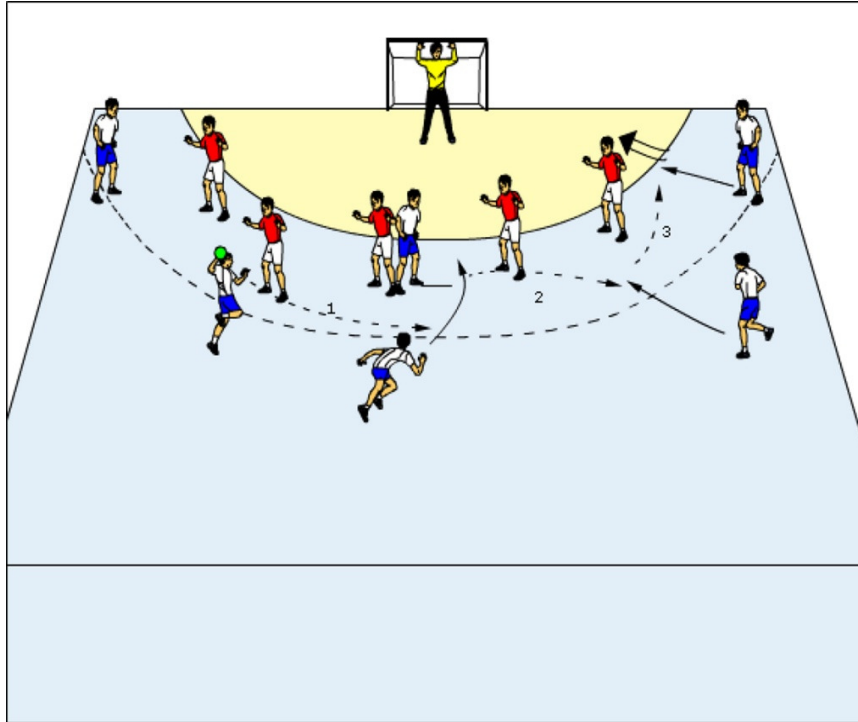
Table 3 shows that about one-quarter of all offences during handball matches are played while one team outnumbers the other. Over 14% of all offences are played when one player more is on the court. This is certainly a high percentage and shows that an important part of a handball match is played with one player more or less. The data which substantially negatively deviate from the average are coloured red and those substantially positively deviating are coloured green. The tactical problems player's faces during a game when a team has one player more or less are very specific in many aspects. The defence usually adapts to the new situation and tries to counter the offensive activities using specific tactical methods. 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 and are often in relation to the time when there are an unequal numbers of players on the field. From the tactical point of view, the advantage of having one player more in handball is big, although this advantage diminishes substantially with other factors, primarily psychological ones. Most high-quality teams follow a specific concept during an offence whereby they outnumber their opponents by one player, and this concept focuses mostly on the **pivot positioning**.

Description of some most commonly employed tactical solutions:

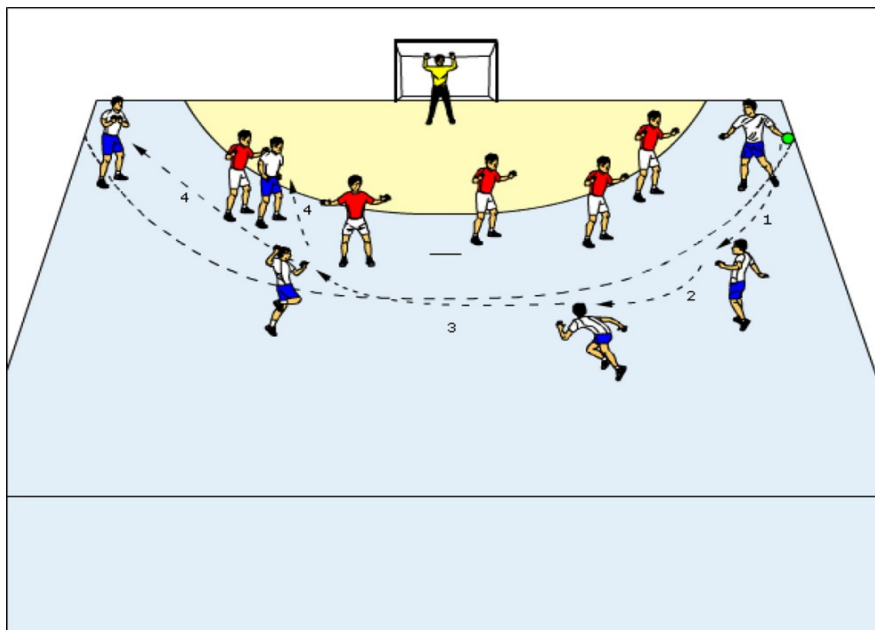
Example 1: The pivot stands between the mid- and the centre defender on the side of the ball i.e. where the offensive players start attacking the goal. In this situation, the left back and the pivot try to cover the mid- and the centre defender. The left back then continues the game by passing the ball to the pivot, the centre back or any other free player. If the defensive players react inappropriately, the left back can also take a shot at the goal.



Example 2: The pivot stands between the half and the centre defender on the side without the ball i.e. the opposite side from where the offensive players start attacking the goal. The offensive players' basic tactical purpose is to take advantage of the pivot's block on the centre defender. Accordingly, the centre back, after receiving a pass from the left back, takes a running start passing by the blocked defender and tries to take advantage of the culmination of events or to in any other way create a situation to continue the game.

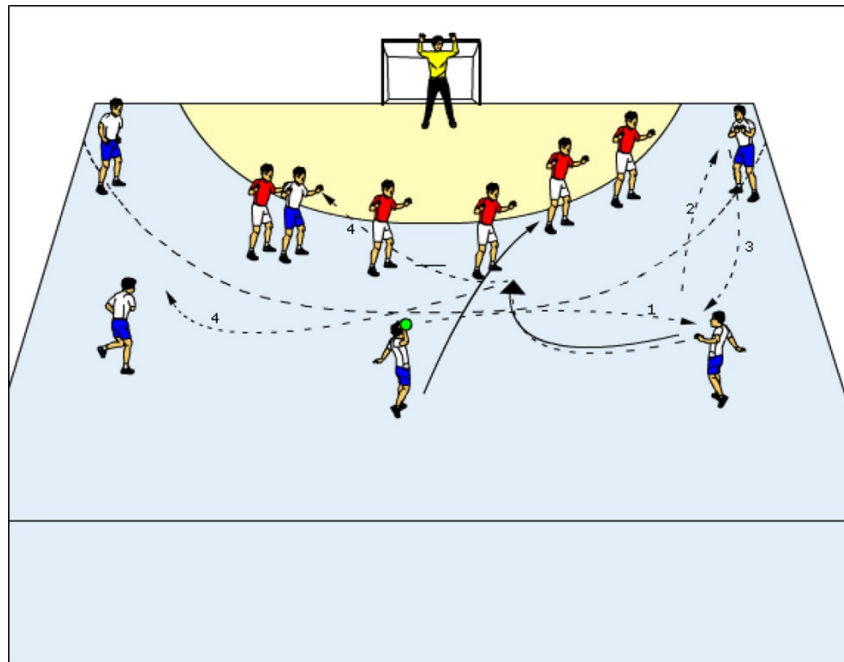


Example 3: The pivot is positioned between the outside defender and the half.

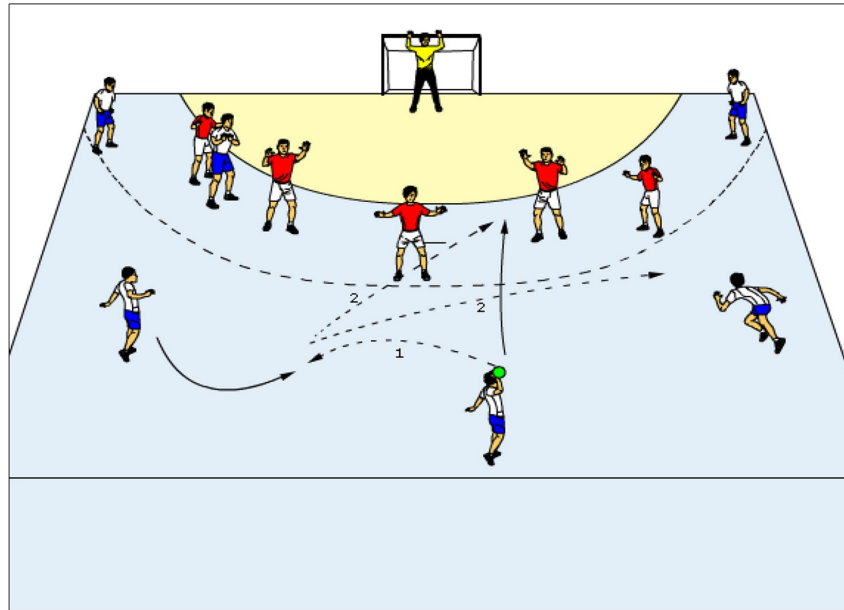


The defensive players try to hinder the classical offence by three back-court players by penetrating deeply into the area of action of the three offensive players (i.e. “anticipative action”). They thereby limit their manoeuvring area for offensive actions. The offensive players thus have difficulties receiving a passed ball during a running start and also with passing it on. The defenders offer the offensive players solutions which are tactically less appropriate and more risky. One of the possibilities for the offensive players to avoid the traps set by the defenders is to move one of the offensive players to the position of the second pivot. This transition can be carried out from the position of wing or a back-court player. It can be spontaneous, depending on the development of the playing situation, or planned as part of a tactical combination.

Example 4: Re-positioning the centre back to the position of the second pivot. The centre back runs along the goal line at the time the right back receives the ball from the right wing. The centre back tries to block the left half, whereas the right back – with a running start – tactically correctly takes advantage of the set block and tries to continue with the game.



Example 5: Another example of repositioning the centre back to the position of the second pivot. Similar to previous one there's only differences in tactical meaning and distribution of passes.



Example 6: Once again re-positioning the centre back to the position of the second pivot. P stands between outside right and mid-right defenders. CB executes a return pass to LB and then continues his movement toward six-meter line.

Conclusion

The described tactical solutions must of course be adjusted to the team's structure or the quality of the players in individual playing positions. It is too often seen during matches at different levels that players cannot find an appropriate solution in the framework of well-conceived tactical combinations. One of the biggest problems is that players decide too soon to take a shot even if their position is not yet perfect. The offensive players are too impatient when preparing appropriate positions for shooting. The game is characterised by an insufficient number of adequately prepared dangerous running starts and passes without any interruptions due to breaches of the rules. The defenders can often easily anticipate the course of action from the initial position of the pivot and the initial development of the tactical situation – the offensive players' action becomes too predictable and thus facilitates the defender's response. An appropriate choice of tactical solutions enables players to learn how to dynamically and creatively solve problems encountered during the game with one player more in the offence. Most of all, a high level of dynamics must be maintained together with an adequate sequence of running starts, all of which must be in line with the depth and width of the play. The interaction with the pivot is very important as it enables the offensive team's numerical superiority to be taken advantage of. The pivots must take the opponents by surprise in their play – they must position themselves and get open in various ways. The blockades must efficiently break up a homogeneous defence and to make more difficult the anticipatory action of the defenders.

A target-oriented and tactically correct offence with a player more is certainly extremely important for a successful offence. A specific tactical concept must be employed, enabling the players to be very creative and choose activities the defenders find difficult to anticipate. Thus, the offensive players exploit the advantages given by their numerical superiority or to hide the disadvantages of player less in a more controlled way. The appropriate training methods are extremely important as it gradually introduces the players to correct tactics. Work with young age categories of players is very important as it enables them to upgrade their knowledge in senior teams.