



EHF 2010 Top Coaches Seminar

Presentation: Trends of the tournament in defence and offence and selected concepts of the teams participating in the main round of the EURO 2010

By: Dr. Wolfgang Pollany / AUT - MC Member Education and Training

First we have to state that there is a clear difference to the findings at the 2008 ECh of the women in MKD. There we could see a difference in style of offence play that we called “Northern” and “Southern”.

This is not the case in terms of offence set-play of the men teams. Most of the teams do use identical moves in offence, maybe because of the general “Diaspora” of the national team players being active in different leagues of more than half a dozen countries all over Europe. And the coaches of those respective teams seem to use a quite narrow band of group tactical means thus forcing the national coaches to pick their offence patterns from this limited offer. The only teams showing a clear difference in this respect were RUS and UKR - I will come back to this later.

Defence set-play

The picture is different when looking at the defence set play. The domination of the 6-0 system has vanished, many teams play different interpretations of the 5-1, some play 3-2-1 even.

Basic systems:	6-0	5-1	3-2-1
	CZE	AUT	SLO
	DEN	CRO	
	GER	ESP	
	ISL	FRA	
	NOR	RUS	
	POL		
Variation:	CRO	SLO	CRO
	SLO	GER	
	AUT		
	RUS		

This list represents the basic set-up only.

In **transitions** most of the teams playing 5-1 do stay in this system, only GER will go back to 6-0.

FRA is a very specific case because they react differently according to the player who takes the position of the point. If this position is played by NARCISSE (#8), they will stay in the 5-1 set-up. KARABATIC (# 13) will move back giving a 6-0 set up.

SLO will shift the 3-2-1 into a 4-2, if they stand in 5-1 they will stay in this set-up.

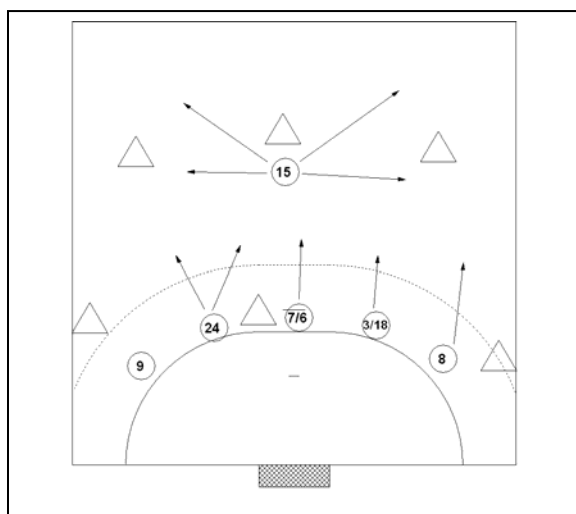
CRO will shift the 3-2-1 into a 5-1, logically their 5-1 will remain unchanged.

In case of man advantage most of the teams will play 5+1 some even 4+2, sometimes there will be a change to a 5-1 “Red Indian”-style. There is no real clear line in this respect the crucial factors for the set-up are score and remaining playing time. Sometimes there was even the feeling that a certain set-up was used for practising reasons.

In the basic set –up of the respective systems there was quite a variety of interpretations as you will see in the following:

Styles of 5-1:

ESP



The Spanish team came up with a very new and interesting interpretation of the 5-1.

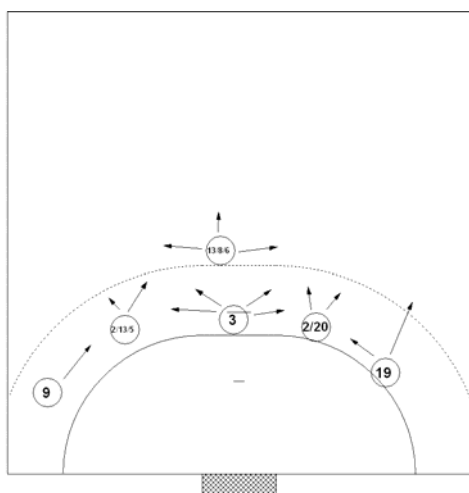
The left wing plays man-to-man against the PM, but according to the situation he is free to move to either side and thus covers an enormous range of space.

This sideways move will occur irregularly whenever the ball is with the wing player of the offence team.

In this case one of the defence specialists (#7, #24, #6) will go extremely deep, if the ball is with the LW even both of them might go deep.

They played it the other way around as well with TOMAS (#8) as point.

FRA



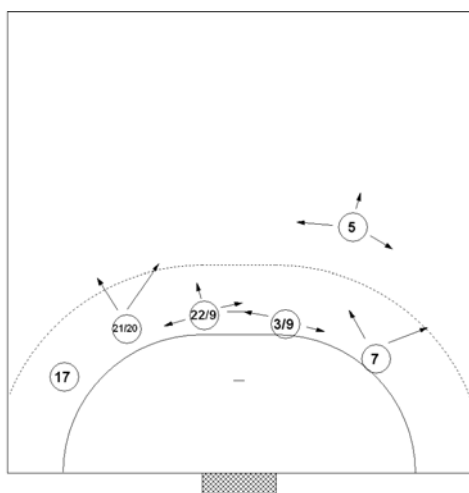
The famous 5-1 of FRA is much more compact, they will only go to 9m.

There is DINART (#3) as specialist covering all the central area and directing the others.

All semicircular moves to the centre with the ball will be tackled by the point, the BL and BR on non-ball-side will go deep in order to prevent fast diagonal passes.

The wings will support the BC in covering the line.

AUT



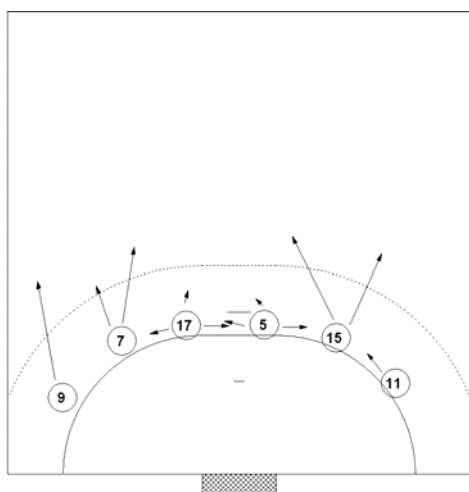
AUT showed a revival of the old eccentric 5-1 that was played by the URS in the late 80s.

The point will cover the LB (or RB) of the offence team, the others will just shut down the space in the free throw area.

The second player on the opposite side will go deep.

AUT played it on both sides according to the team line-up of the opponents team.

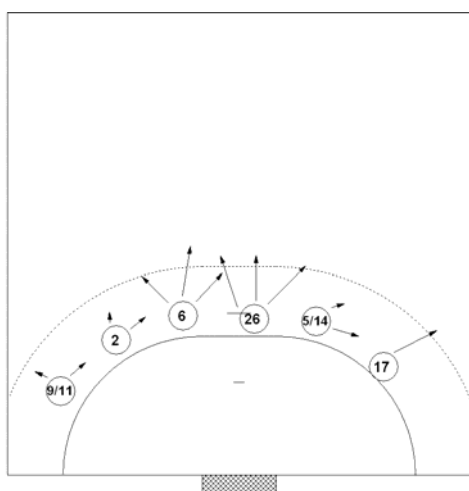
Styles of 6-0: ISL



ISL moved away from Swedish 6-0. They had two specialists strictly closing all the central area (#17 and #5). The RW (#15) played BR and went deep. So did the BL as well. The ball carrier was covered strictly as long as he was with the ball. In this case no switch was allowed. This gave a very compact close defence together with the good anticipation of #7 and #15 this system was very effective.

GER, POL and CZE played pretty similar to this.

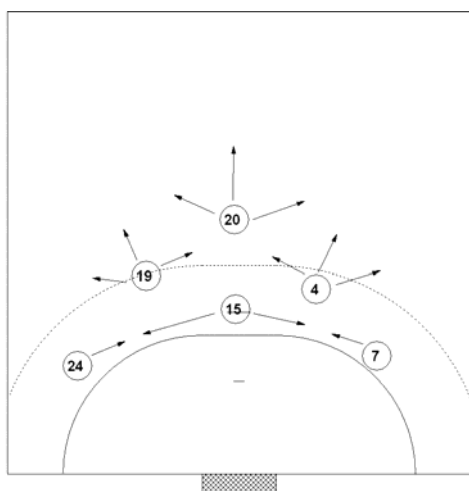
DEN



DEN played the well-known Swedish 6-0 with the two specialists (#26 and #6) going deep in the central area. Due to their excellent cooperation this worked quite well. The other players covered the infighter zone in the first place.

NOR extended this concept by going deep on non-ball-side with the BL/BR respectively in order to fight fast diagonal passes.

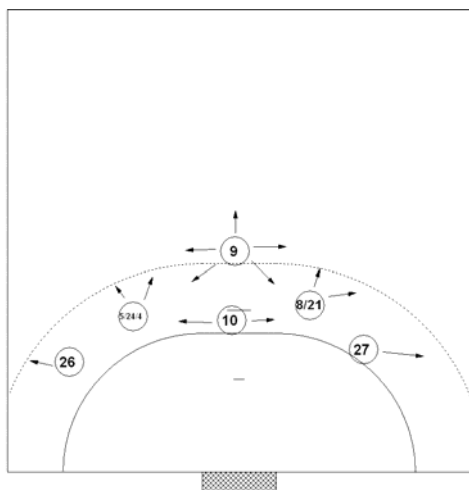
Styles of 3-2-1 SLO



Here we see a revival of the 3-2-1 with “Libero”, a system that had been very common in the 80s. SLO played this vs. POL very physical and man-oriented.

The LW was in the point place, the outside defenders supported the “Libero” who had to move with the ball flight in covering the line. The physical load on the players is extreme, therefore this system cannot be used for the full 60 minutes.

CRO



CRO plays the orthodox 3-2-1 as a variation of their regular 5-1.

From the image of the set-up there is almost no difference the change you will only notice in the distribution of tasks between the players.

In this case the wings are responsible for their direct opponent without support, BL and BR will stand higher than in 5-1.

As for VORI (#9) in the point position, his interpretation is very much individual, sometimes even moving back into the formation.

Offence set-play

The dominating concept is the outnumbering of the defence in close quarters. In achieving this, almost all teams use group tactical means and 2-2 or 3-2 solutions.

The core characteristic of the offence play is that it is focused upon decision making and continuation play. The sequence is:

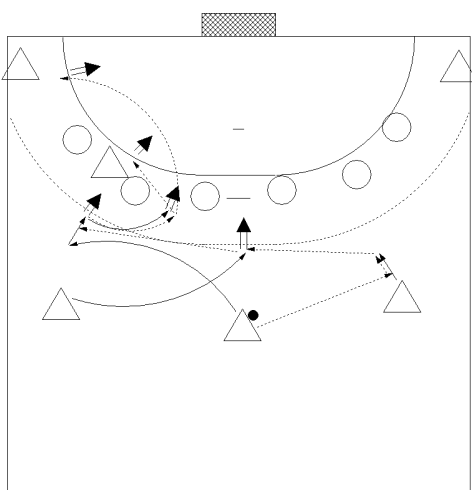
initiating move – decision making – termination/continuation – decision making – termination

For the initiating move all the teams take some kind of a crossing with or without ball. This gives the offence player a clear advantage in terms of speed and direction of the move.

Therefore in many cases he will be able to pass the direct defender and force the approach of a second one thus giving a man advantage situation in the continuation.

This holds good especially when **playing versus a 6-0 defence set-up**.

DEN



PM passes the ball to RB and goes for crossing without the ball with LB who will receive the ball in full running.

1st solution – fast shot through the gap

2nd – pass to the PM.

Continuation of PM:

1st – fast shot over LP

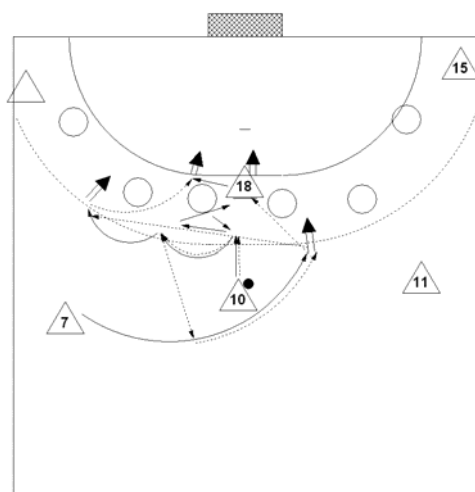
2nd – counter move and shot

3rd – counter move and pass to LP

4th – counter move and pass to LW.

The Danish team will play this on either side concentrating the decision making on the PM in the first place.

ISL



PM thrusts straight. With the IR tackling he moves against throwing arm side, passes back to the crossing LB and continues moving outside.

LB

1st - From the fast run the LB aims for the shot.

2nd - IL tackling and IR too slow – pass to LP

3rd - IL and IR perfect – counter pass to PM.

PM

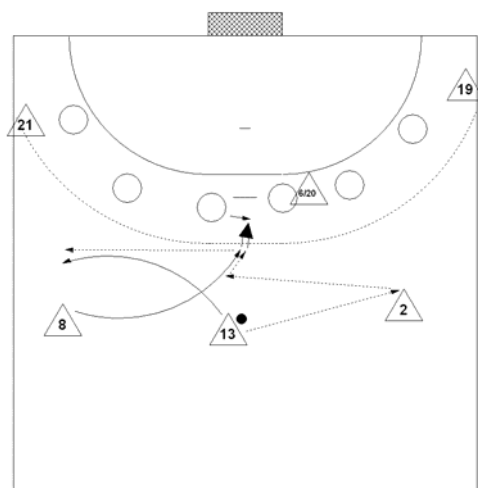
1st - Shot or breakthrough

2nd - Pass to moving LP

3rd - if OR comes running pass to LW

They played it to both sides. Of course they took the easy solutions in case of a mistake of the defence as there are direct pass PM – LP or pass LB – RB in case BL moves inside for the tackle with continuation to the RW if necessary.

FRA



This move consists of two phases:

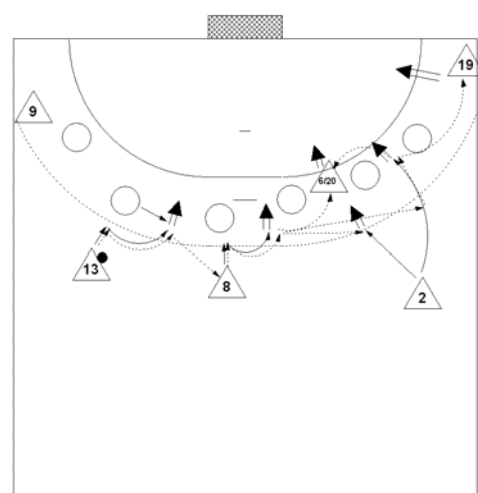
The start is like in the move of the team DEN but the position of the LP is different.

LB

1st – jump shot through the centre

2nd – if tackled by IR pass to PM

The first phase is restricted to this and only in case of a clear mistake of the defence LB will pass to the LP straight or continue to RB.



After receiving the ball back the PM starts a full 1-1 penetration action.

PM

1st - termination

2nd - continuation to LB

LB

1st - full 1-1 with shot

2nd - if IL comes tackling - pass to LP

3rd - pass to RB

RB

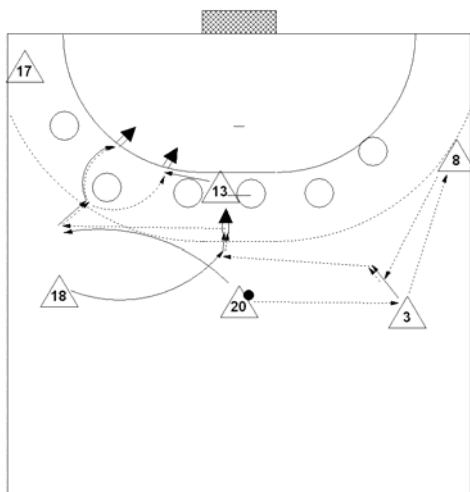
1st - straight move – shot over LP

2nd - outside move – shot or pass to LP

3rd - continuation to RW

This move shows a lot of decision making by several players. If they do well it's almost impossible to defend this concept. But on the other hand there are a lot of chances for mistakes and taking wrong decisions as well thus explaining why the team always seems to need some time to find the good rhythm in a tournament.

ESP



Once again the identical opening moves. The LP is positioned in the very centre and there is an additional give and go action RB-RW. This reserves more time for the LB for the inside sweep.

LB

1st- Shot over the LP

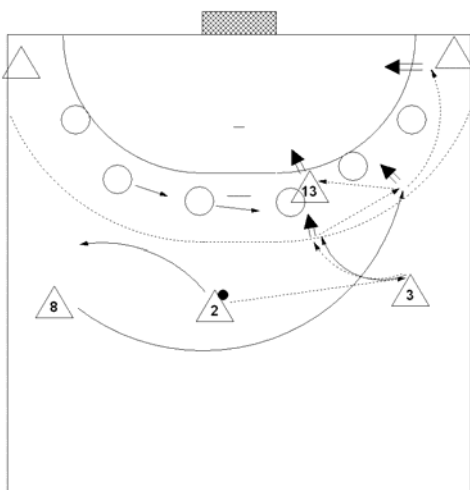
2nd – pass to PM

The PM is a terrific 1-1 specialist in a perfect set-up now.

1st - 1-1 with shot

2nd – pass to the moving LP.

POL



A very specific move of the Polish team.

The PM goes for a crossing without the ball with the LB but the RB will sweep inside with the ball thus effecting a double-crossing.

RB

1st – shot over the LP

2nd - pass to LB after long run

RB

1st - shot or breakthrough

2nd - pass to LP

3rd - pass to RW

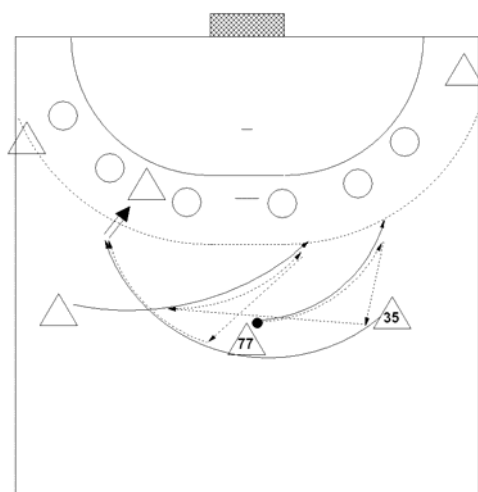
This is a good move with clear outnumbering of the defence but with high risk since there is a concentration of 4 players in close quarters.

If the move is not successful there is little chance to fight the fastbreak of the opponent since there are only two players left for this purpose.

The second problem in the tournament turned out to be the bad finishing of the Polish RW players. This gave the defending teams the chance to leave them open for the shot and fight all the others thus avoiding the more dangerous shots by the LP and the RB in the first place.

In sharp contrast to all these concepts based upon so called “frame moves” and decision making I do like to present an old fashioned concept without decision making, a so called fixed scheme.

RUS



Double crossing in the backrow initiated by the PM.

At the end of the move the striker aims for the shot over the LP.

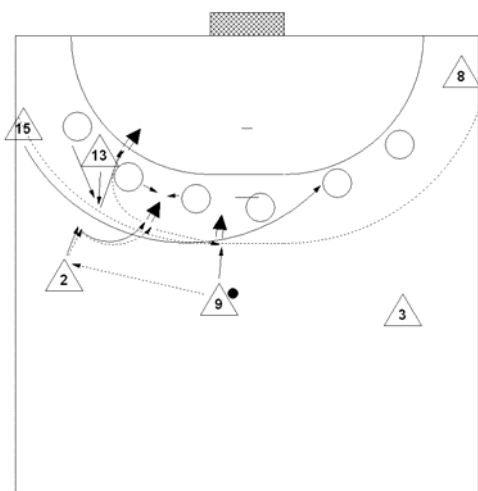
The running lanes are on 12m or more, the concept is based upon the physical shape and the shooting force of the strikers.

The system is played to both sides effecting shots from the “wrong” side which gives some problems to the cooperation between GK and defenders.

The weak point of this system is the lack of decision making for the defence and there will never be outnumbering. Since you cannot prevent the backs from shooting you have to find a good cooperation GK – defenders. If the defence succeeds in that the system will collapse due to the high pressure that lasts on the strikers in both physical and psychological respect. They have to run long ways and they do not find alternatives for the shot – score or fail you have to shoot anyway.

Now we take a look upon **transition concepts versus 6-0**

ESP



Sweeping inside of the LW against the ball flight.

LB

1st - inside sweep and shot

2nd - inside sweep with pick&roll with the LP

3rd - pass on to the PM.

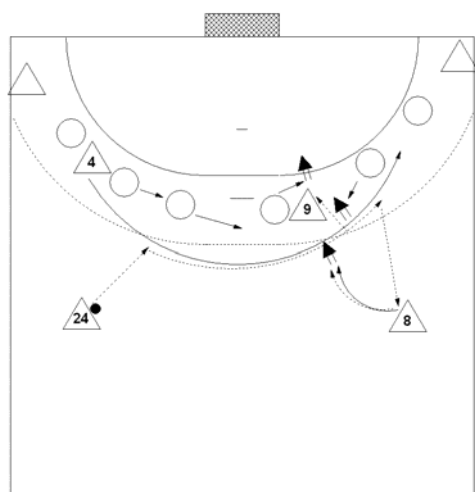
PM

1st - fast shot through the gap

2nd - continuation to RB or LW at the line

This basic concept was played by several teams with and against the ballflight. The crucial point is the position of the LP. Only in this particular position the outnumbering of the defence will be inevitable because the OR will be in the back of the LP and thus eliminated. So the BR cannot tackle properly because of the danger of the pass to the LP and this will force the IR to approach for support. It is a very effective concept for teams with fast ground shooters (jump shots will take too long).

CRO



From a 4-2 set-up, BALIC (#4) will run along the 9m-line and receive the ball. He will pass by VORI (#9) who will block the IL.

1st - shot or breakthrough

2nd - pass to LP

3rd - pass back to RB if all the defenders do a perfect job.

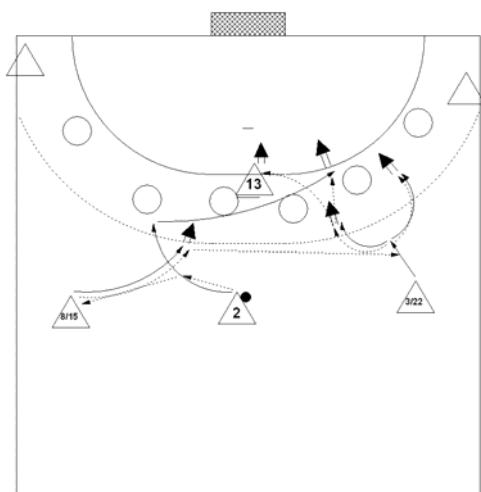
RB

1st - shot over LP

2nd - diagonal pass to RW if OL approaches the onmoving BALIC.

This move of course is very specific and it is tailor-made for the special skills of BALIC and his cooperation with VORI. This move they played extremely successful with METLICIC on the position RB during the last three years or so.

POL



PM starts a crossing+screening move for the LB with the ball.

LB

1st - shot

2nd - pass to RB

With this pass the PM will continue running to the line diagonally.

RB

1st - shot

2nd - pass to either player on 6m

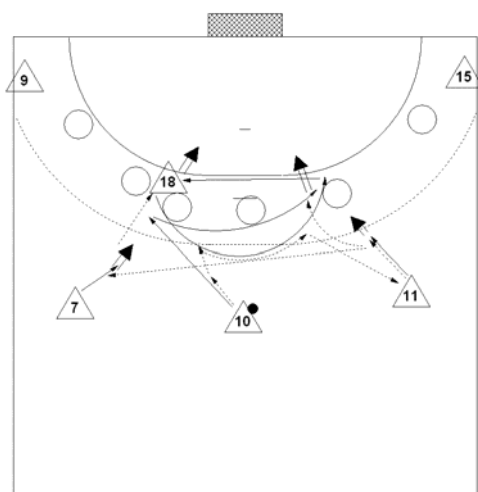
3rd - outside move and continuation with shot, pass to RW or to LP.

A very effective move of the Polish team which they played versus 5-1 in the identical way.

Once the diagonal pass is fired, this move is very hard to defend.

The only weak point of this pattern is the dependency upon the performance of the RB. If this player is in good shape – super; if not – trouble ahead.

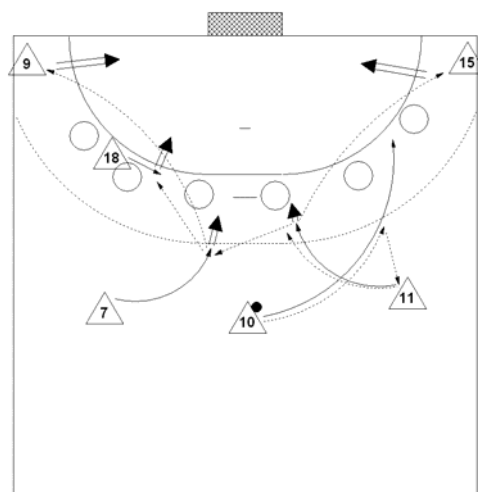
ISL



Transition to 4-2 including a double switch between the PM and the LP.
The PM follows the ball with a little delay and by this opens the line for the return move of the LP.
RB
1st - shot
2nd - pass to PM
3rd - diagonal pass to LB.
LB
1st - shot
2nd - pass to LP

Very similar to the move of POL, the double switch makes it even more confusing for the defence. Applied versus 5-1 as well with an additional option for the RB to pass on to the RW immediately (sometimes behind the back even).

ISL



Simple crossing PM – RB with the ball with transition of the PM to the line.
RB
1st - shot
2nd - pass to RW
3rd - pass to LB
LB
1st - shot
2nd - pass to LP
3rd - pass to LW.

The basic move of the team ISL. Played vs. 6-0 and 5-1.

In the 5+1 situation the PM will do the crossing with the RW with the RB moving back to 12-14m.

This concept proved to be extremely effective in the play 6-5 as well.

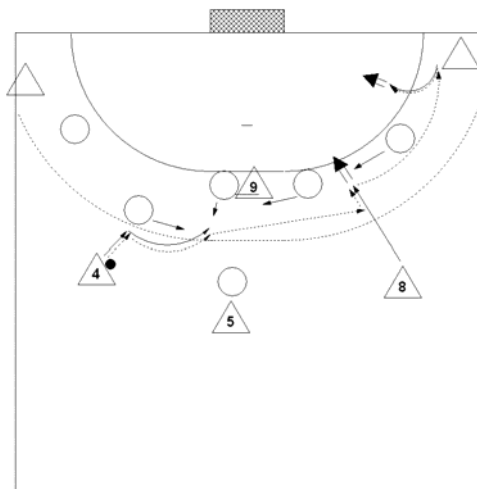
Most of the basic concepts of the teams were applied against 6-0 as well as against 5-1.

DEN played a transition of the LW very much alike that one that we showed done by ESP vs. a 6-0 set-up.

CRO and RUS had specific standards vs. 5-1 defences, CRO again based upon the individual skills of BALIC, DUVNJAK and VORI. RUS had to find ways to move away the point and preserving open the long running lanes of their tall strikers.

Specific concepts versus a 5-1 defence set-up.

CRO



Against a 5-1 formation with a very man-oriented point BALIC (#4) will go to LB and demand the ball.

In this position he will start a 1-1 into the back of the point. IF he manages to force the approach of the BC he will shoot a fast diagonal pass to the pushing RB.

RB

1st- shot

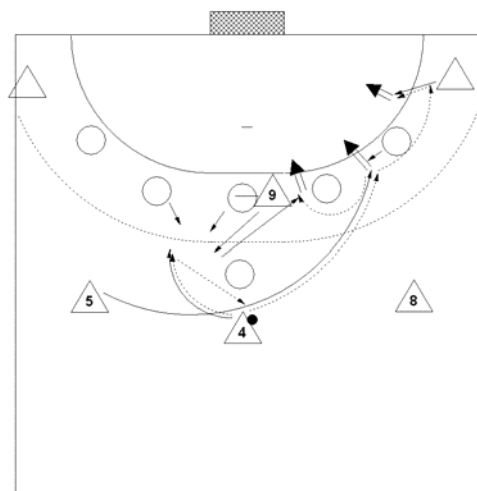
2nd- pass on to RW.

This turned out to be the standard move in the preliminaries with RUS. The crucial point is to force the support of any second defender.

If the point will come back for tackle, BALIC will pass on to DUVNJAK (#5) and the effect will be almost the same with DUVNJAK moving towards throwing arm and outnumbering the defence in the very same way.

DEN used an almost identical concept against 5-1 formations.

CRO



Concept versus a ball-oriented 5-1 defence.

PM goes for a crossing with the ball with LB. This move is supported by a pick&roll action of the LP.

The crucial part is that the LB has to run very fast and the pass has to be perfect.

In this case the LB will have three options:

LB

1st- breakthrough and shot

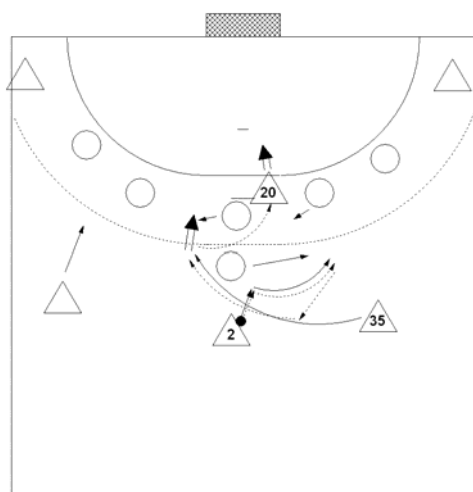
2nd- pass to the RW

3rd- pass to the rolling LP.

Even the French defence struggled sometimes in the final when confronted with this explosive move.

The move is very effective due to the high speed but on the other hand this high speed execution might give some problems to the LB in terms of perfect decision making and technical faults. Offensive faults will occur every now and then because of the complexity of the tasks to be carried out with top speed.

RUS



The PM starts a crossing move with the ball with RB and passes the ball to the lefthander. The point has to move with the PM to avoid outnumbering on this side. Now the lefthander can sweep inside with a long run for the shot. The additional option is a pass to the LP. If he will be tackled from throwing arm side, continuation is very simple with parallel thrusting until the LW.

This move was the most effective of the team RUS. And it was the only modern one with variations and decision making.

FILIPPOV (#2) forced the point to give way because if not, then he would shoot by himself or pass to the LP, a move that they continued to the RW in some cases.

At the end of the day we can sum up all the observations to these core factors:

1. Greater variety in defence set-play than in the past. Some old hats have been brushed up and do look pretty attractive again.
2. Fast throw of is an option for many teams but only for special use. ISL and SLO were the teams playing it as a basic conception; all the teams were able to do it every now and then.
3. The standard moves in offence set-play are very much alike across all the teams. The basic principle is to gain speed advantage by a first move and to use this advantage to outnumber the defence in a limited area.
4. In order to do this, team tactics have passed away, group tactical means 2-2 or 3-2 do play the crucial role. Teams clinging to team tactics still faced a severe setback.
5. Decision making is the decisive element for success within a predefined frame. The team playing faster on the same level of decision making or the team managing a higher level of decision making on the same level of speed will win the match.
6. The turnover play has improved so extremely that fast-break goals will result from steals or wrong passes as well as from saves with direct passes by the goalkeepers in the first place.
7. The offence-defence-switch of one or two specialists is still dominating; every team has one specialist at least.
8. There is no need for a 16 player line-up obviously. Controlling the time played of the players in the respective matches you will see that the coaches made use of not more than 14 players in general. Many coaches were pretty reluctant in terms of substitutions and continued playing with the starting 9 (7 + 2 specialists) most of the playing time.

Hope you enjoyed it, thanks for your attention.

Wop, ☺

2010-02-17