Training technical/tactical elements
- Fake passes
- Crosses – fake crosses
- Footwork – receiving the ball in step »zero«
- 50 feints
- 30 shots
- Counterattack – delayed counterattack
- Goalkeeper in handball
- Individual work with circle runners
- Individual work with wingers
- Individual work with backcourts altogether about 60 examples
- Ball hiding
- Homework – examples and instructions
- Past – present – future
CONTENT

PREFACE 5

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 6

1. KEY 9

2. INTRODUCTION 10

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRM FOOTING IN HANDBALL 12

4. COACHING AND TRAINING METHODS 13

5. LEARNING AND TRAINING THE MOST IMPORTANT BASIC TECHNICAL/TACTICAL HANDBALL ELEMENTS 16
   • DRIBBLING 16
   • PICKING UP THE BALL 18
   • PASSING AND CATCHING THE BALL 20

6. HANDBALL APPROACH 24
   • IMPORTANCE OF FOOTWORK IN HANDBALLI 26
   • FOOTWORK COORDINATION EXERCISES 26
   • RECEIVING THE BALL DURING AN APPROACH 31

7. FAKE PASSES 33
   • A FAKE PASSING DRILL USING TRAINING POLES 33
   • A FAKE PASSING DRILL IN A TRIANGLE 34

8. CROSSES AND FAKE CROSSES 36
   • EXAMPLES OF CROSSING AND FAKE CROSSING DRILLS 39

9. FEINTS 42
   • FAKE PASS FEINT 43
   • BODY FEINTS 45
   • FAKE SHOT FEINTS 53
   • OTHER FEINTS 55
**FEINT COMBINATIONS** 58
**FEINT TRAINING AND PRACTICING** 60
**FINISHING - HINTS AND TIPS** 68
**THE MOST FREQUENT ERRORS** 69

10. **SHOTS ON GOAL IN HANDBALL**
   **GROUND SHOTS** 70
   **JUMP SHOTS** 73
   **DIVING SHOTS** 76
   **SPECIAL SHOTS** 78

11. **COUNTERATTACK** 81

12. **PRACTICE SESSION PREPARATION - WARM UP**
   **PRACTICING TECHNICAL/TACTICAL ELEMENTS WHILE WARMING UP** 97
   **WARMING UP WITH DRILLS FOR TRAINING BASIC HANDBALL MOTOR TECHNIQUE AND TECHNICAL/TACTICAL ELEMENTS** 97

13. **ATTACKING COOPERATION** 108

14. **GOALKEEPER IN HANDBALL**
   **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOALKEEPERS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE TEAM** 112
   **GOALKEEPING SKILLS** 115
   **GOALKEEPING AND POSITIONING TECHNIQUE** 118
   **GOALKEEPER PREPARATION** 119

15. **INDIVIDUAL WORK WITH HANDBALL PLAYERS**
   **INDIVIDUAL WORK WITH BACKCOURTS** 121
   **INDIVIDUAL WORK WITH WINGERS** 124
   **INDIVIDUAL WORK WITH CIRCLE RUNNERS** 127
   **PLAYING HANDBALL ACCORDING TO ADAPTED RULES** 130

FROM BEGINNER TO TOP PLAYER
The inspiration for writing this handball textbook came from talking with my fellow coaches. They have often said:

“You have coached all male and female age groups from beginners to top players and you know best how it’s supposed to be done.”

“You have won numerous titles in many categories.”

“You must preserve your legacy as a coach and student of the game for future generations of players and coaches. You have a duty to do it!”

Feedback from my colleagues has always been important to me and I have respected their opinion. At the end, they did convince me.

The most decisive opinion was that of dr. Marko Sibila, who helped and advised me from the start. Later, dr. Primoz Pori took on his role and we have gotten along fantastically, because he really appreciates my ideas. I would like to express my gratitude to both of them.

Of course, special thanks go to Cveto Pavcic who, along with Joze Silc, inspired me to become a coach and to study at the Faculty of Sports in Ljubljana, Slovenia. I still remember his words: “You were fair and persistent as players. You should be the same as coaches and raise players to be just like you. You must always remember this.”

This book contains some examples from my long-time career as a coach and student of the game. I am certain that all players and coaches will find something new - something they haven’t seen before. Even those with a different approach and ideas might discover useful bits to include in their work. If this book will motivate at least one person, help them or give them just one new idea, then my wishes are fulfilled.

AUTHOR

Nikola Radić
Nikola Radic is a well-known and acclaimed Slovenian handball expert of Bosnian origin who started playing football and handball at the Military Music School in Vukovar, Croatia. After coming to work in Slovenia, he played for Inles handball club (later Inles-Riko) of Ribnica which competed in regional competitions in the Lower Carniola region, Slovenian competitions and the 2. Yugoslav division for many years. The club later qualified for the 1.B Yugoslav division as well.

After a successful playing career, he dedicated himself to coaching. After a few years of training youth categories, he quickly moved onto senior teams. In the 1990s, he became one of the leading handball experts in Slovenia. For a short while (due to job-related obligations), he coached Slovan and Olimpija handball clubs of Ljubljana which competed in the 1. Yugoslav division and were considered the best men’s and women’s teams in Europe at the time.

From 1984 to 1991, he also led the U21 Slovenian national team which successfully competed at the annual tournaments of Yugoslav republics and regions as well as at the Alpe-Adria tournaments (against Austria, Italy and Switzerland) where it regularly won first place. It consisted of well-known players born between 1966 and 1973 and coming from almost every Slovenian handball club. The most famous were: Borut Macek, Boris Denic, Ales Levic, Bruno Glaser, Jani Likavec, Tomaz Jersic, Uros Serbec, Ales Anzic, Tetey Banfro, Tomaz Cater, Bostjan Strasek, Sergej Sokolov, Uros Privsek, Jani Cop, Roman Pungartnik, Dusan Andrejic, Marko Papez, Gregor Cvijic, Tomaz Tomsic, Beno Lapajne...

He also coached other well-known players, such as: Simona Sturm, Irma Kapidzic, Marjeta Marton, Maja Durisinova, Dijana Danic, Marta Bon, Tanja Polajnar, Stanka Bozovic and Draga Pesic, Mitja Valencic, Aleksander Lapajne, Robert Krasna, Tomo Vodopivec, Bojan Cotar, Ales Praznik, Leopold Kalin, Dinko Vuleta, Bojan Voglar, Aleksander Vuga, Tomaz Peternelj, Peter Mahne, Robert Begus, Matjaz Tominec, Tone Tiselj etc. They are now respected coaches, officials and businessmen.

He coached, led and played with many players from former Yugoslavia who were sent to Slovenia for mandatory military service; they competed in military competitions and participated at tournaments organized to honor various events and holidays. They were top players and Yugoslav national team members, e.g.: Zdenko Zorko, Zeljko Nims, Zdravko Miljak, Petrit Fejzula, Zvonimir Noka Serdarusic, Jovan Slavkovic, Branimir Zeljkovic, Nikola Beslac, Luka Gorisek, Rade Uncanin, Pavle Jurina, Mirko Basic, Jasmin Mrkonja, Radivoje Krivokapic, Boris Jarak, Momir Rnic, Jovica Cvetkovic and many others. Nikola Radic coached them and learned from them. And he learned a lot.

At the 1978 military tournament in Split, Croatia, he was the top scorer with 66 goals. The same tournament featured players, such as: Vlado and Miha Bojovic, Fetahagic, Nikolic, Pavicevic, Radenovic... He managed to repeat this feat with Slovan handball club of Ljubljana at
the Yugoslav Veteran Cup in Umag, Croatia.

He played for the Slovenian national team and received many awards at the municipal and republic level as well as countless honors from the Handball Federation of Slovenia.

Studying at the Faculty of Sport in Ljubljana, Slovenia, literally opened his eyes, especially in terms of training theory. He managed to expand his practical experience gained during the years working in handball. He took interesting and useful ideas from others sports and adapted them to handball.

In spite of everything he achieved, he will always remember the unbelievable success of his local handball club of Ribnica - a small town of 4000 residents about 40 kilometers south of Ljubljana, Slovenia. This is where he spent the best moments of his life and sporting career and this is why he believes the greatest achievements of his playing and coaching careers are:


Nikola Radic is the founder of the well-known Ribnica handball school of thought which has profoundly influenced handball development in Slovenia. More than a hundred Ribnica players have played for various Slovenian national teams (A, B, U21, U17, U15) with 19 of them playing for the A or B senior team and 30 for the U21 team.

The greatest mark was left by Tomaz Tomsic and Beno Lapajne who remain the Slovenian record holders for the number of caps (more than 200).

The U17 team from Ribnica won the Yugoslav title (1989 in Sarajevo, players born in 1971, coached by Zdenko Mikulin).

The U17 team from Ribnica won the European club title (2000 in Gothenburg, players born in 1982, coached by Stojan Gelze and Janko Ilic).

U21 teams won the Slovenian title multiple times; they won 5. and 3. place at the Yugoslav Finals in Bjelovar and Doboj, respectively (born in 1965/66, coached by Nikola Radic and Zdenko Mikulin.)
Many Ribnica coaches also worked in Slovenian national teams: Cveto Pavcic, Joze Silc, Nikola Radic, Zdenko Mikulin, Janko Ilc, Ciril Andoljsek.

Countless chairmen and board members also played a role in the club’s achievements: Stefan Lovsin, Matic Zobec, Stane Kersnic, Ciril Grilj, Venko Čihal, Dušan Erčulj, Viktor Pogorelec, Dzavid Tuzovic, Vlado Mihelic, Vekoslav Zavolovsek, Franc Silc, Bojan Kos, Lado Orel, Andrej Mate, Brane Ambrozic, Pavel Hocevar, Toni Prus, Marko Obrstar etc. The club has always been named for one of the long-term sponsors: INLES, INLES-RIKO, and RIKO HISE today.

Lately, Nikola Radic has been dedicating his time to youth coaching and educating coaches who train youth categories. To help them and make his job easier, he published a handball manual with the original title: »HANDBALL – Learning and Training Attacking Activities« in 2008, which was extremely well received by Slovenian sports experts. The following book contains a translation of this manual as well as additional content.

Young players (born from 1989 to 1996) who have played for Ribnica Riko Hise and who have trained according to the ideas represented in this book, have reached seven finals of school and national competitions and have won 4 NATIONAL TITLES in four and a half years (January 2004 - June 2008).

Nikola Radic currently works for SVIS handball club of Ivancna Gorica, Slovenia, as an adviser to youth coaches. He gladly answers calls from other clubs to present his book and his coaching methods.

At the invitation of national team coaches Marjan Potokar, Jani Klemencic and Milan Ramsak and the Handball Federation of Slovenia, he is a member of the backroom staff of various men’s and women’s youth national teams (players born in 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000) where he is training and educating the next generation of handball players.
INTRODUCTION

An extremely fast way of life and technological breakthroughs have had a visible effect on the way sports training processes are planned and executed - just as with all other parts of our lives. To be honest, this is definitely the only way to keep young athletes training regularly, because they will soon figure out that their handball skills are improving. This will be a source of pride and motivation to invest even more and develop even faster. We can safely say that all young athletes in all handball schools or clubs are extremely enthusiastic and will always give their best and this is why they deserve the best possible coach (in the world) regardless of their ability or talent. In a way, I am appealing to every teacher and youth worker to never forget how important this is. Furthermore, the school and club executives who select people for these important posts should also be extremely aware of this.

The popularity of handball is growing in Europe and worldwide. In contrast to past Olympic Games, World and European Championships, today’s handball competitions can be seen by everyone interested thanks to satellite television and the Internet. We can watch the greatest handball players at work in competitions such as the Men’s and Women’s Handball Champions Leagues, other European cups and the best national leagues. We can analyze the top teams and their players to the tiniest of details. This book tries to combine this type of analysis with my longtime experience of coaching young players. When describing individual elements and their segments, I followed the existing references (completely or at least to some extent). But while there is no shortage of references for some elements, there is less about others and some haven’t even been written about before, so I decided to emphasize those youth handball coaching aspects that haven’t been the subject of greater scrutiny so far. I am referring to the fake technical/tactical attacking moves which indirectly affect the defense as well. The attackers are constantly trying to create space to move into by forcing the defenders to lose balance with numerous fake moves. At the same time, the defenders are trying to stop the attackers, and their defensive interventions increasingly consist of fake elements forcing the attackers to make bad decisions. To sum it up, the game is full of fake passes, shots and movements, so defenders and attackers must constantly adapt to the situation and always be able to predict and expect their opponent’s actions and react appropriately at just the right time. Players must strive to develop even further and invent new versatile combinations of various fake elements to add to their repertoire of technical/tactical moves. Each time we sit down to watch a match, we can see hundreds of fake elements that together make handball the game it is. Fake moves are also used when a player is one on one against the goalkeeper in a classic counterattack or when taking 7-meter shots. This confirms my point that HANDBALL (as well as all other sports) IS BASED ON TRICKERY. This is the reason for handball’s popularity modern handball still consists mostly of spontaneous and improvised attacking moves that are unpredictable and hard to prevent for the defense, and exciting for the spectators.
The changes of the throw-off rule and the effect this has had on substitutions of attacking and defensive players, have contributed greatly to the development of the game. Sooner or later we can expect additional changes, such as completely scrapping the throw-off and limiting the attack duration, leading to players being even more mobile, substitutions being more frequent etc. Physical strength is losing its significance and attributes such as motor skills, technical/tactical knowledge and speed are becoming more important. Today, good players are distinguished by their ability to play in attack and defense, their versatility and their capacity to immediately adapt to quick changes of attacking and defensive systems. Although traditional defensive systems will (probably) be replaced by mixed variants more suitable to quick and frequent transitions, the significance of the following two universal defensive/attacking principles will never be diminished: DEFENSE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS and ATTACK IS THE BEST FORM OF DEFENSE.
THOUGHTS OF OTHER TOP COACHES FROM THE AREA OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

TONE TISELJ, coach of the Krim Mercator Handball Club and the Slovenian Women’s national team, two-time winner of the Women’s Champions League, runner-up at the European Men’s Handball Championships 2004 with Slovenia

Nikola Radic made a profound impact on handball in Slovenia as a player and a coach and I can say with great pleasure that this book is remarkable as well. I recommend it to all players and coaches who want to improve their handball skills.


The title of this book is completely justified, because it is special and unique. It is a school of handball, full of new concepts, possibilities for development, useful ideas and short and clear messages from everyday coaching.

I am certain that it will be extensively used by coaches, players, parents and everyone wishing to better understand the game of handball.

ZDRAVKO ZOVKO, coached the following men’s handball clubs: Zagreb (won the Champions League twice), Celje (reached the semifinals of the Champions League twice), Foteks (European champions in 2002 and reached the semifinals of the Champions League twice); coached the following women’s handball clubs: Lokomotiva, Zagreb and Podravka, Koprivnica and the women’s handball team of Croatia.

The title of the book reveals its extent. The author starts with the basic elements and gradually proceeds to the more complex ones, always explaining them in a fluid, concise, modern and professional manner.

This book deals with individual handball coaching which cannot be frequently seen in handball literature and I am extremely pleased with this. I believe that individual work is the future and the next step in the development of handball training. The book is expertly written and easy to read and I recommend it to all handball enthusiasts.

LINO ČERVAR, the long-time coach of Zagreb and the handball team of Croatia who won countless medals in the last decade including the World Championships and the Olympic Games (2003 and 2004). He currently works for RK Metalurg, Skopje, Macedonia.

The famous coach of the Croatian national team, World and Olympic champion, currently coaching Metalurg Skopje of Macedonia.

The book from Nikola Radić comes at a time when there is a void in the field of handball literature.

He was not only a special player, he left his mark especially as a teacher and a coach. That is why his words have significant importance, particularly when it comes to designing training methods and developing different didactic approaches in handball.
As this is something that most handball coaches lack, his book is especially important. There are many coaches, but not many among them are truly teachers. Nikola Radic is one of the few who are capable of being both. His book is an encyclopedia of positional and situational exercises for developing feint and shot techniques used to support the movements in various situations on the handball court.

The author is contributing to the affirmation of a modern and dynamic approach to handball, especially in terms of a faster response to tactical changes in attack as well as quick feinting and shooting (something Nikola excelled at as a player) on a small space or when time is running out.

This book is trying to teach us how to take advantage of the player’s inertia in the moment of a shot or a feint, because this is, in addition to successfully dodging defenders and playing fluidly, one of the key lessons every handball coach must know.

**DRAGAN ADŽIĆ**, coach of the women’s team Buducnost and Montenegro national team that won the Women’s Champions League, the European Championships in Belgrade and a silver medal at the London Olympics in 2012.

I strongly recommend this extraordinary book by Nikola Radic to coaches, players, players’ parents and people who work in handball.

It will complete their knowledge and broaden their horizons in every aspect of the game of handball.

I was particularly impressed by its complexity and by the way it deals with themes not yet sufficiently analyzed, like fake passes and feints.

This book is an enormous contribution to the future development of handball in southeastern Europe and elsewhere.

I would like to congratulate the author for this remarkable work and the meticulous approach and thank him for a wealth of useful information.

**BRANISLAV POKRAJAC**, PhD (Faculty of Sports in Belgrade), One of the best players and coaches in former Yugoslavia, winner of the Olympic Handball Tournament in both roles. He coached national teams of Yugoslavia, USA, Spain and Egypt as well as gave lectures in 11 countries, such as Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, France, Greece, USA.

It is always exciting to read new handball literature that is based on theoretical and practical experience of the author and the book “From Beginner to Top Player” by Nikola Radic is a perfect example of this. The author unselfishly analyses and shares his knowledge, ideas and experience acquired through the years.

You will not be able to play handball after reading this book, it would too easy. It is however a step forward, it forces you to think, study ideas, be creative and learn something new. The main advantage of this book is to present coaching methods that can aid in the development of players and coaches alike. When I lecture, I always point out to students and future coaches that it is not handball technique that needs to be taught, it is players who need to be taught the correct technique. In my opinion, this is precisely what this book is about.
ABAS ARSLANAGIĆ- AKO, the legendary Yugoslav goalkeeper, allegedly the best in the world in 1970s. Throughout his career, he coached numerous top clubs and national teams, like the handball teams of Zagreb and Borac Banja Luka and the Yugoslav and Croatian national teams. He is currently working in Qatar.

It is obvious that the author put a lot of effort, experience and love into this book to make it one of the rare textbooks that encompass every aspect of handball. I am extremely happy that the book contains an extensive chapter on goalkeepers. I am confident that the book is not limited only to senior coaches, but is aimed specifically at the growing number of youth coaches. Every new handball book is welcome, especially if written by successful and experienced coaches who have dedicated their lives to handball. Everyone from coaches, players, parents and handball enthusiasts can find something of interest in this book. I can say only this: Nikola, congratulations and thank you!