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THE EVOLUTION OF BEACH HANDBALL, ITS CONTRIBUTION TO INDOOR HANDBALL AND THE ADVANTAGES OF ITS PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this essay is, as the title itself shows, on one hand to establish the most important aspects of the evolution of this sport in its short life, and on the other hand, to think about its influence on indoor Handball, in order to assess, finally, the advantages of its practice.

It is obvious, and this must be the first thing to bear in mind, that we are dealing with a sport which is completely established worldwide, recognised by national and international federations and that is played by, more or less, 400,000 people all over the world. The players are mainly (and this should be the first sociological fact to bear in mind) men and women who usually play indoor handball, but practice beach handball during the summer.

Nevertheless, specialised players have evolved, obviously due to the good weather conditions in their areas, which train and play beach handball throughout the year. A good example is the effect on the city that celebrated and hosted the last Beach Handball World Championship, Cadiz.

Together with its development, and practically from its very inception, a few studies and pieces of research have appeared which have led to giving theoretical basis to studies and articles on the technical and tactical evolution.

In this essay, I want to introduce a new view about a sport discipline which is gaining importance, whose evolution and development depends on people who are related to handball on all levels.
ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF THE GAME

The first references to Beach Handball were found in the Nineteen Eighties (80s). The first tests and studies began, curiously, in the Netherlands and Italy. And I say curiously because in both countries handball is not a very popular sport.

According to the data of COBH (Beach Handball Organising Committee), Beach Handball came up as a sport activity in 1992 thanks to the initiative of FIGH (Italian Handball Federation). It spread throughout Italy quite quickly, and it was there that the first competition rules were set down.

In Ponza and Bentotene islands, in July and August of 1992, the 1st Ponziane Island International Championship took place (Fernández, et.al.1999).

In Spain we find three geographical references where the practice of this sport began, somewhat in an anarchic, then gradually unifying its Rules and approaches: Oleiros (A Coruña), Lanzarote Island and Cádiz.

In 1993 the COBH organised the 1st International Beach Handball Championship; this meant a radical change since at that moment its development in all over Europe commenced (Spain, France and Portugal were the first references).

This is the reason why this essay wants to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the “age of majority” of Beach Handball.

In 1994 the first International Tournaments were celebrated in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and Buenos Aires (Argentina). This event meant a new step, in this case definitive, for the knowledge and development of this sport discipline in all over the world.

At that moment the main difficulty was the lack of uniformity about the Rules of Game. A good example can be found in the fact that the Rules of the Italian Federation in 1992, the Portuguese Federation in 1993 and the Spanish Federation in 1997 had important differences.
The Federations gradually agreed on their criteria and, as a result, the European Handball Federation published the Rules for all the Tournaments and Competitions in 2002.

In my opinion, this meant, a new beginning because as it is clear that every game, sport or game requires unified criteria in its rules in order to be widely played.

From now on, the different “schools”, countries or clubs will develop its tactics and strategies in different ways.

It is well-known that other sport disciplines have had neither national nor international consolidation because its rules have been different in different places. Fortunately, it is not our case.
TACTICS AND PLAYING SYSTEMS

When talking about tactical concepts directly related to Beach Handball, since I became interested in this game, it has always caught my attention the obsession of all teams to make the best use of the possibilities that rules offer.

The first and clearest case of this is the practically universal strategy to change the goalkeeper in defensive actions or offensive actions. It is obvious that the double value of his goals makes everybody try to put their best player in the best offensive conditions but, as well, also in position as goalkeeper.

And this has been very important for the success of the game. I mean the constant situations of 4 attack players against 3 defensive players. It is so important that, should this not be the case, it would be very difficult to score a goal in 3 against 3 situations and the spectactority of the game would be affected.

From the offensive point of view, most the teams develop a 3:1 playing system, that is three players in the 1st line (1 right back, 1 left back and 1 central player) and one in the 2nd line (the pivot player). See graphic 1.
Other combinations are not likely to appear in the future, as for example 4:0 (1 left back, 1 right back and 2 central players) or 2:2 (1 left back, 1 right back and 2 pivot players). See graphic 2 and 3.
Another difference is the possibility that the 3:1 playing System offers the movement of one player in the 1st line to the pivot player - graphic 4.
On the contrary, from a defensive point of view, there are a few playing systems. As well as the classical 3:0 system - 3 players in the 1\textsuperscript{st} line and nobody in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} line, (graphic 5), other interesting possibilities have already appeared:

- Playing System Defensive 2:1 positional (2 players in the 1\textsuperscript{st} line and 1, the coming on player, in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} line) - graphic 6.

- Playing System Defensive 2:1 mixed (2 players in the 1\textsuperscript{st} line and 1, the coming on player, in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} line defending M-M one offensive player) - graphic 7.

- Playing System Defensive 2:1 flotation (2 players in the 1\textsuperscript{st} line and 1, the coming on player, in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} line making a deterrent task in one of back zone) - graphic 8.

- Playing System Defensive Pressing (3 defensive players defending M-M in all or middle the play ground) - graphic 9.

It is obvious that this System is a big risk, but in stressful situations it can be operative. It has already been used a few times, but without success.
CONTRIBUTION TO INDOOR HANDBALL AND ADVANTAGES OF ITS PRACTICE

In this chapter, we now look for the contribution of Beach Handball to its indoor counterpart; in particular the transfer training concept.

As it is known, when we refer to this concept, we mean the utilisation of some exercises in training to look for its direct applications to competition situations. Well, I really believe that the most important characteristic of beach handball is the great training transference to indoor handball. It is so, that the technique and tactic situations of handball have developed perfectly in the beach game.

Initially, we should mention passes, receptions, movements, feints, goal attempts, patchy stops, blocks, simultaneous clash and mutual resistance. Only the bounce, by the roughness of the playing court it is not in this list.

Secondly, pass and go, cross, screen, blocks, swig, opponent change, the slide and the contra block are to be noted.

If you observe any training session or match, we can reach the conclusion that one or some tactic situations have more or less incidence at any time.

Another important aspect is related directly to the concept of periodization of training. According to the well-known theories of Dr. Mateev in this sense, it is obvious that the best situation is a six weeks preparation period; eight months of competition; and another six weeks of down transition period and one month of interval. Well, unfortunately these objectives can not always be accomplished, above all the transition period. Then, when the competition finishes, teams pass to the interval directly, and this period is often very long.

Even in high performance handball, there are a lot of teams that stop for eight weeks. The lower the team’s profiles, the longer this period is, with all the problems that this brings about.

Also in this aspect Beach Handball can help to bridge such long periods as the competitions, official or friendly, usually take place when indoor teams are in the interval period.
Finally, I would like to emphasise that matches and competitions on the beach offer an interesting show that arouses interest, not only in its supporters, but also in those with no connection to handball – simply passers-by.

It is important recognise that the different tournament organisers try to provide visitors to beach handball event with the material and personal infrastructures very appropriated to that kind of show (stands, music, soft drinks, a good atmosphere), which helps a lot in the development of Handball.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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