QUALITATIVE REFEREE ANALYSIS

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NOMINATIONS:

To have all the referees in good psychological and physical condition when they were welcomed to Austria, we nominated all the referees three months before the start of the tournament with the request that they undertake serious preparation. The following 10 referee pairs were selected for the 2005 W17 ECh in Austria:

AUT  Brkic (b. 78) / Jusufhodzic (b. 80)
BUL  Dimkova (b. 69) / Planska (b.78) – female
FRA  Bonaventura (b. 80) / Bonaventura (b. 80) – female
HUN  Andorka (b. 77) / Hucker (b. 79) – Young Referees
LAT  Jaskin (b. 79) / Zabko (b.79)
NOR  Gullacksen (b. 78) / Löck (b. 79) – female
POR  Cacador (b. 75) / Nicolau (b. 81)
ROM  Florescu (b. 80) / Stoia (b. 80) – female
TUR  Erdogan (b. 77) / Özdeniz (b. 78)
UKR  Rakitina (b. 69) / Tkachuk (b. 69) – female

As shown above, the proportion of male and female pairs “fifty-fifty” was a novelty within this event. Additionally, the goal was to only invite the referees who had not yet reached or were over 30 years of age with the aim of gaining first hand insight into the running of such an event. This year, as in previous years, a young referee pair (HUN) was also nominated. Neutrality was a factor with the BUL, LAT, POR and UKR nominations. Ultimately, it was granted that the pair from UKR would lead the final, beside which they mastered very well. In this case it was also a premiere as it was the first time a female pair had led an ECh final.

Preparation:

On the day of arrival all referees were asked to submit a feedback form as to reveal who had prepared for the W17 ECh. To summarise it was found that - despite the request from the EHF regarding serious preparation - the majority of the federations, respectively referees were not satisfied with the following points:

- Regular deployment during Women’s matches in country of origin:
  The majority of referees are from the time of their nomination rarely used. It is particularly remarkable that the majority of female referees (despite EHF status) have little confidence and therefore are hardly established on an appropriate level.

- “Guidance” through referee experts in country of origin:
  This is rarely to be found! Therefore the referees were neither observed nor did they receive a feedback form. Nevertheless, almost all of the referees have
completed a course that has incorporated the new innovations regarding the IHF rules.

The nominated referees and delegates have received their tasks from the EHF and to be precise they all had to prepare and present one of the topics mentioned below during the short course:

Referee Tasks:
A) Defence systems – Task distribution between referees
B) How can I improve my ability in refereeing? Preparation before and during the Championship
C) Problem situations at the 6m line

All in all the presentations were professionally prepared and presented. Due to the positive feedback from all participants (DEL & REF) this style of cooperation will be also promoted in the future. On the side of the referees the couples from AUT, LAT, POR as well as TUR had the honour of presenting their work and to the technical officials; this part was undertaken by two women (Berthold and Cuderman) and with others the following topics were included:

Delegate Tasks:
A) Observation Criteria (Standards, attitudes and motivation)
B) Progressive behaviour during the match
C) Conflict and stress management (Control of substitution area/contact with team officials)

RULES THEORY TEST (IHF Catalogue of Questions):

The day after the short course all referees must undertake a test of the rules (30 questions form the current IHF catalogue of questions). All the questions that were identified by the referees as being problematic were filtered out and discussed further during this short course.

PHYSICAL FITNESS TEST:

For the first part, all referees must complete the Cooper Test (under the observation of a physician) the day after their arrival. Fortunately, all referees completed the 2400m within 12 minutes competently.

During the two weeks, in order to be able to give the young referees valuable training recommendations so that they can improve their efficiency and reduce the risk of injuries, they were under the guidance of Prof. Hans Holdhaus (Institute for Sport Medicine) who examined the following points:

- Sprinting
- Stamina
- Concentration
- Balance
- Shuttle Run
EXPERIENCE WITH THE NEW RULES (PRACTICE):

Quick throw off:
Many referees especially in the beginning during the first two match days speak of great problems regarding this rule. In principle the problem lay in the fact that the referees are unsure of their positions. However, this problem can be quickly rectified and in other tournaments the referees have to a large extent optimally “positioned” themselves favourably to be able to intervene when necessary.

“Harmless fouls” with a great risk of injury:
In particular during the counterattack where the attacker is focused on the ball, a light push from behind or from the side can have serious consequences. Therefore, it is necessary for the referees to cooperate closely when it comes to these harmless looking actions. It is clear that in disputed cases when a “time out” is called the referees can take the time to discuss the situation amongst themselves and come to a decision.

Direct free throw after the end of the official match time:
Good cooperation between the timekeeping table and the referees is a proven necessity in order to discourage substitution.

To give or not to give a time out (with 7m):
All referees received the appropriate EHF regulations (version 2) regarding this disputed rule and have in principle adhered to it. The more matches a referee has led give them more of a “feeling” for the situation and they knew when a time out was compellingly necessary and when not.

INTERPRETATION OF THE RULES (EXPERIENCE / FOCAL POINTS):

Progressive punishment:
A good basis for the successful judgment of an action is the ground position of the defence player:

1. Is the defence player facing the attacker or can he still only tackle from behind, respectively from the side?
2. Is it due to a ball orientated or a purposeful –against the body- action?
3. It also has to be clarified whether the throwing arm was only blocked or whether it was grasped; to be precise, hit.

With all these hits from the side etc. where the health of a player is damaged, the referees must come through the difficulties and punish the offence player accordingly.

Excessively hard fouls, in which there is no chance of gaining ball possession and the intention is to hurt the opposition, are to be punished progressively (e.g. Counterattack).
Actions in the circle and situations with the line player:
It is to be noted who take their position first (Line player or defence player?) and above all how they do this. The block with the backside, arms or legs is forbidden as well as the crossing into the goal area.

Step rule (also the “Hot Potato”):
With situations where the attacker for example takes two steps and then is fouled, however continues and takes two steps further, it is very often decided on the “advantage”. In order to make the right decision about disputed step actions the referee must have a “feeling”. If he does not have this, then the facts decide whether the attacker dribbled after overstepping.

Passives Play:
Referees must be able to read the game in order to correctly identify a passive play situation. It is not only a case of being able to notice whether the attacking crew are playing in tempo or playing for time, but also to think and observe along the same lines are assumed. Please take note whether the attackers run only crosswise and constantly provoke fouls and match stoppages or are they really keeping the pressure up. Additionally it must be clear every time how many players are in place (are a team playing undermanned or not?), how long the game is played and how long is it stopped.

Other rules:
Keeping the distance during free throws
Execution of the free throw whilst running or during the jump

MINI COURSE:
During the “Mini Course” the major topics were:

- “New Rules” – interpretation and detailed discussion
- Specific cases of rule 8 – ball or body oriented actions
- Passive play – discussion
- Keep the match under control
- Co-operation, common work referees and technical delegates
- The guidance of referees during/trough the ECh (DEL matter)

DAILY MEETINGS:
After each playing day a separate meeting with all the technical officials was held, in order to evaluate:

- REF performances
- Common line
- Special situations
- Problem cases

This was a good working system, because there were open discussions on the above mentioned issues, which was very helpful for all the participants.
In order to analyse their performances, after each playing day there was also a REF meeting. This analysis included information on positive and negative tendencies with the main goal to contribute to an improvement of the REF performances (day by day).

By using only a “theoretical education system”; the major part of education has always been too static / textual, therefore the use of a visual learning/education system (video analysis) was used. With the help of these video clips (well prepared by Mr. R. Kleiner) we were able to work more efficiently than ever before.

GLOBAL EVALUATION OF REF PERFORMANCES:

- All matches were observed by our technical delegates on two observation sheets (see enclosed results). The experiences evaluated in the Education Group are to be recorded on the observation sheet
- The referees from UKR and HUN showed good and constant performances throughout the competition
- The referees from AUT, FRA, LAT, POR and TUR were generally good with the individuals and the teams, however the mistakes they made were due to a lack of experience
- The performance of the referees from BUL and ROM were acceptable in some situations and insufficient in others. They clearly showed a lack of experience overseeing matches.
- The referee pair from NOR showed a surprisingly negative performance throughout the whole tournament
- It should be mentioned however that the referee commissions from the nominated referees federation must pay more attention to the preparation of the referees when they have been nominated for competitions

The main problem continued to be the interpretation of the rules:

- For the entire duration of the match - keep the match under control
- Progressive – Ball or body orientated actions
- Importance of the correct execution of throws – 3m
- Understanding of passive play
- When they have achieved EHF status the female referees must be nominated regularly in their home country also within the highest leagues (ROM, BUL, FRA)

EVALUATION COUPLE-BY-COUPLE:

AUT BRKIC/JUSUFHODZIC:
A referee pair with enormous potential! To begin they were somewhat nervous, however their capabilities grew day by day. “Team work” must be improved.

BUL DIMKOVA/PLANSKA:
In view of the bad basic conditions in their own country (weak league) their achievement was noticeable, particularly from Planska. Dimkova, in some matches was still “extremely concentrated” – it is not necessary to whistle each little thing.
FRA BONAVENTURA/BONAVENTURA:
As they are still very young, in order to develop they need to be at more matches in the highest French leagues. In “normal” matches they did not encounter any problems; however, they still need to learn how to deal with complex situations.

HUN ANDORKA / HUCKER:
This young pair had a good understanding of handball, nevertheless, they showed weakness when it came to step decisions. Hucker must absolutely work on his movement coordination and improve his knowledge of the language.

LAT JASKINS/ZABKO:
During the first two matches no clear line was to be recognised concerning progressive punishment. Otherwise, they have shown themselves to be confident before, during and after the match and were in good physical condition. Knowledge of English must be improved.

NOR GULLACKSEN/LÖCK:
The referees come from a country where there is a strong tradition in women’s handball. The Norwegian pair showed understanding of the match, but also showed that they were not in good physical condition. This contributed to concentration problems and associated technical errors.

POR CACADOR/NICOLAU:
This pair was a surprising pleasant and very much an ascending TEAM, who have enormous potential for the future. Their strengths included decisions regarding progressive punishment as well as offensive fouls. There is a need however to improve the range of steps and coordination with the timekeeping table. They showed an excellent command of the English language.

ROM FLORESCU/STOIA:
The problem for these two ex-handball players lay in the fact that they hardly oversaw matches in the highest leagues in Romania. At the beginning of the tournament they were very nervous and dealt too severely with progressive punishments. The EHF expects more support from the federation in such a case. Florescu must improve her command of English.

TUR ERDOGAN/ÖZDENIZ:
Two referees from a country that is described as “developing Handball nation” continuously improved during the tournament. Özdeniz made the majority of the decisions. In addition he does not have the necessary experience and the required expertise. The interest that the referees showed during the referee courses was remarkable. The more matches that they oversee will be better for their development.

UKR RAKITINA/TKACHUK:
This pair of referees without a doubt achieved the most during the W17 ECh. The necessary amounts of motivation and talent of these two women (their particularly good intuition) will be a large advantage for them in the future…for the first time used in a W17 final match.
Conclusions

I have prepared some specific questions for the referees in regards to their preparation also taking note of their self control relating to their abilities, the results were as follows:

- How many matches did you officiate in the last 30 days?
  
  12 Matches – one couple  
  10 Matches – one couple  
  0 Matches – 50% of participants

- Did you receive any support from your Chief of Referees or Delegates?
  
  YES – 6 couples  
  NO – 4 couples

- List your strengths
  
  Advantage – 8  
  Progressive Punishment – 7  
  Passive – 6  
  7m – 3  
  Offensive Foul 2  
  Cooperation – 6

- List the areas that you wish to develop
  
  Steps – 12  
  Progressive Punishment – 9  
  Passive – 6  
  Personality – 7  
  3m Distance – 2

Generally there was good cooperation between the referees and technical officials during the entire championship. The accommodation and meals were more than satisfactory and the organisation of transportation was faultless. The social program prepared for the participants was well organised; the reception in the Town Hall, excursions to Melk and Krems were very enjoyable.

I would like to thank Mr. G. Hofbauer and Mr. M. Hausleitner and their crew for the entire fantastic job they did.