11th Men’s 18 European Handball Championship in Austria
12.07- 22.07 2012

Qualitative Trend Analysis

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1. Introduction

The 11th European Men’s Championships took place in Austria between 12th and 22nd July 2012. The host cities of the tournament were Bregenz (2000 capacity) and Hard (2300 capacity) in Vorarlberg.

The participants were met with perfect conditions, which facilitated the organisation of a successful tournament. The playing and training venues were situated within a short distance from the teams’ accommodation sites and the playing schedule, along with the rest days allowed the teams a good recovery and ensured a competition on high level.

It is the second time that Vorarlberg is the organiser of such an event, which provides proof of the systematic work on behalf of both the hosting Nation and the Austrian Handball Federation.

16 teams competed in a total of 56 matches to elicit the 11th Men’s 18 European Champion 2012.

For the purposes of the qualitative analysis this paper will concentrate primarily on the first 4 teams.

1.1 Tournament Overview/ Participants

![Picture 1: Participants and groups of the Men’s 18 European Championships 2012]
1.2 Final Results top 8 teams

- ½ SWE- GER  29:30 (13:14)
- ¾ DEN- ESP  37:32 (19:12)
- 5/6 AUT- SLO  24:30 (8:16)
- 7/8 CRO.BLR  31:22 (15:7)

1.3 Final Standing

1. Germany  2. Sweden  3. Denmark
4. Spain  5. Slovenia  6. Austria
10. Serbia  11. Romania  12. France
16. Finland

The first 10 teams qualified for the 2013 Youth World Championships.
2. History of the Men’s 18 European Championships

The following chapter will provide an historical overview of the Men’s 18 European Championship, with a focus on ranking history and medal count.

2.1. Ranking History

Table 1: The best 8 ranked teams since the beginning in 1992

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>POR</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>RUS</td>
<td>ISL</td>
<td>SRB/MON</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>GER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>RUS</td>
<td>POR</td>
<td>CZE</td>
<td>HUN</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>SWE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>HUN</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>ROU</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>DEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>ISR</td>
<td>GRE</td>
<td>RUS</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>POL</td>
<td>ISL</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>ESP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>RUS</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>SVK</td>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>SRB</td>
<td>SLO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ISR</td>
<td>FYR</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>POL</td>
<td>SVK</td>
<td>SRB/Mon</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>SUI</td>
<td>AUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>AUT</td>
<td>ROU</td>
<td>YUG</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>POR</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>TUR</td>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>CRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>SUI</td>
<td>HUN</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>POR</td>
<td>AUT</td>
<td>HUN</td>
<td>BLR</td>
<td>SRB/Mon</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>BLR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 reveals, some nations have maintained a high level consistency throughout the years. In 11 Championships, Denmark qualified among the top four teams nine times, even though they were unable to win the gold medal. Both Croatia and Germany have been in an upswing for the past five Championships and Spain, as well as Sweden have each qualified five times among the top four. However, despite the good performance of these teams, they were still unable to demonstrate the same stability as Denmark. It lies in the future to see whether Denmark will be able to continue their trend. In order to get an overview of the performance of the teams in the last years, Table 2 provides a medal count.
Spain, Croatia, Germany and Denmark each competed three times in a final. Portugal, Russia and Sweden competed in a final twice.
## Table 3: All star team, best players

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Star Team</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>Body height (cm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal keeper</td>
<td>Kraft Niklas</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left wing</td>
<td>Verdiček Matic</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left back</td>
<td>Mamic Marko</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre back</td>
<td>Ernst Simon</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivot</td>
<td>Piniero Martin Diego</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right back</td>
<td>Kerkeløkke Niclas Vest</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>Kildelund Kasper</td>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best defence Player</td>
<td>Marcel Engels</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVP</td>
<td>Zettermann Pontus</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top scorer</td>
<td>Maros Luka</td>
<td>SUI</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Description Teams

The following section provides an overview of the teams’ general and what were their characteristics.

3.1. Spain

3.2.1 Spain Defence

The biggest surprise of the tournament was perhaps Spain’s defence work. Spain played a 1:5 defence system during the entire competition and the high intensity of such of way of playing needs to be acknowledged. Their aim was to disturb the offensive game by starting the attack at 18 metres. For this purpose, Spain players needed to allow as little space as possible to their opponents and hence obliging them to commit unforced errors.

In the semi-final against Germany (Spain’s 6th game), Spain seemed to be unable to keep up the performance of the previous games. Not only did Germany play a perfect give and go to defeat the Spanish defence, but Spain were unable to compel the German team to unforced errors. During the previous games, the opponents were not given as much space as the German team was in the semi-final, but sure enough it is not possible to maintain the same performance with a 1:5 defence system throughout the whole tournament, on such a high level.

The Spanish team average 1.85 metres. According to the Spanish coach, a 1:5 defence system is their only chance to perform on such a high level, even though this formation is not foreseen by their education plan. It is a well-known fact that the defence play of Spain is more aggressive oriented.

It has to be mentioned that although the Spanish defence was extremely aggressive with 172 attack interruptions, they still were not able to disturb the attack of the other teams as often as
GER (216), DEN (210) or SLO (197). They provoked the opponent players to make technical mistakes or wrong passes and this fact is reflected in the number of steals: with 53 steals Spain had the highest number of steals of all top 8 teams.

3.1.2 Spain Attack

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3.2. Denmark

Denmark played a very good tournament. They only lost two games: 27:34 against Spain in the main round and 35:28 against Sweden in the semi-final. Just like Germany and Sweden, the Danish team also has powerful back players. The right back (3), Kirkelökke, was selected in the all-star team. Albertsen (5), left back, was the best shooter of his team with 31 goals out of 52 attempts with a percentage of 60%. In the placement match for bronze, he scored 7 goals and was once again the top scorer of Denmark. After ranking 3rd in this championship, Denmark continue to play with consistency on high level over the years. Like Germany and Sweden, the whole team is counterbalanced in attack and defence. Their ability to rotate without compromising the quality of their game is their biggest advantage.

3.2.1. Denmark Defence

If we take a look at Denmark’s average height of 1.93 metres, it becomes clear that their defence focuses on a 6:0 or a 5:1 system. Because of the tall middle block density is created in the area, which allows the pivot no space to act. The defence players attacked at the beginning from 9 metres. Denmark tried to force their opponents to take throws from outside or from a bad angel. The amount of 210 interruptions underlines the aggressive nature of the Danish defence. With 33 defence blocks, they are placed 3rd among the top 8 teams.

3.2.2. Denmark Attack

Denmark achieved 224 goals out of 370 attempts, with a percentage of 61%. However, the standardised team play was organised very slowly. With 36 fast breaks, they rank at 7th place. Denmark often changed attack and defence players.

They may have not played as fast as for example Sweden or Spain, but starting with the organised attack, Denmark played the fastest ball around the defence compared to all the other teams. This created dangerous throwing positions at any time. An individual strong court back, which is able to make easy goals, is necessary for the execution of a successful attack play. Their performance attests to this observation: out of 224 goals, the back players scored 117 times with an average percentage of 59.6%.
3.3. Sweden

From the beginning of the tournament, Sweden put on a great performance. Sweden played with a classic 6:0 defence. In this tournament, the Swedish team had an average body height of 1.89 metres and was physically one of the strongest teams of this championship. Although they lost the final against Germany, Sweden put on a very high level of performance.

It was impressive to observe how the Swedish players were educated both individually and as a team. The backbone of their strong play is undoubtedly their defence. Mainly active on the line and working perfectly together with the goalkeeper, they were able to change their defence system immediately, and make it harder for the attacking players to be dangerous.

3.3.1. Sweden Defence

Generally, the defence worked on 6 metres at times but stretched to 9 and 10 metres when a back player was in possession of the ball. A tall block allowed the opponent pivot no space to get a pass. This way, the Swedish defence forced the opponent back players to try 9 metre shots. With 26 defence blocks, they rank 4th among the top 8 teams. With 177 conceded goals in the tournament, they had the best defence in this championship.

3.3.2. Sweden Attack

Sweden’s way of playing underlines the important role of the centre back player. Number 6 and captain of the team, Konradsson Jesper, created good throwing position for his back players, initiated the most actions and were also able to score goals. Within his team, he ranked 3rd with 23 goals during the tournament.

Under the line, the tactical concept of offensive play was clear. With a high pass velocity and clear run trails, they created good throwing positions for the back players and the wings. Their fast play generated a lot of pressure for the opponents’ defence. The individual skills of the back player gave them the chance to make easy goals from outside the 9 metres or to create majorities with starting actions in 1 to 1 situations. This fact was particularly visible in Sweden’s first game against
Germany. The backcourt was able to score easy goals from outside the 9 metres. Therefore, the German team had to start their defending at 9 metres. This allowed more space for the pivot, as well as for the back players in 1:1 situations.

3.4. Germany

Germany faced some problems at the beginning of the tournament. They started off with a draw (22:22) against Iceland, defeated France, and lost in the last preliminary round against Sweden with a clean 20:29.

Between the preliminary round, and the main round and finals, we saw two completely different German teams. The defence changed from a classic 6:0 to a variable aggressive system. Eventually, Germany played a mixture of 3:2:1 and 6:0 formations.

3.4.1. Germany Defence

Germany was one of the tallest teams of the Championship, in average (1,89 m). Therefore, the initial 6:0 defence system did not come as a surprise. The problem in the matches of the preliminary round was that Germany acted too passive, compared to the main round and the finals. In the first matches, Germany tried to defend on the line of 6 metres, forcing the opponents to shoot from 9 metres. Their difficulty to work together with the goalkeeper at the beginning resulted in the concession of easy goals from outside. Germany achieved 216 attack interruptions, more than any other team in the tournament. They also achieved 24 defence blocks (5th among the top 8 teams), as well as 30 steals (ranked 4th among the top 8 teams).

3.4.2. Germany Attack

Germany’s defence specialist, Marcel Engels, often switched between defence and attack. In this situation, Germany played slow and organised the attack. In the final, one of the reasons they played so strong was that Engels did not switch after defending the opponents’ attack, but rather played fast breaks and extended fast breaks, which as a result did not allow Sweden to change their defence specialists. This contributed to the creation of a fast and dynamic match.
One of Germany’s biggest advantages was their tactical discipline. As soon as they qualified for the main round, the whole team played exactly in the way necessary to win the matches: in the main round, with a simple “give and go” against Spain, and in the final with an extremely aggressive 3:2:1 defence system, which made the difference in the end. It is often said that German teams are tournament teams. In my opinion, during this championship this perception was confirmed.

The set up play of Germany was clear. They played a fast ball around the defence and used mainly crossing, empty crossing and transition on 2 pivots to organise their attack. They also tried to keep their game diverse, so as to prevent the opponent from getting accustomed to the German way of play. It was interesting to see how the back players often changed their position. Simon Ernst (centre back, selected for the all-star team) played in all positions in the back.

The Germans shot 208 goals out of 350 attempts. With a percentage of 59 % they rank 7th among the top 8 teams. They played 8 fast throw offs and had a percentage of 75%. In the statistics of fast breaks, they only ranked 7th together with Belarus, with a percentage of 64%.

3.5. Overview defence systems

Table 4: The mainly played systems of the top 8 teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Characteristics of the organized defence play TOP 8 teams</th>
<th>Anthropometric data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Height (in m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Started with 6:0 during tournament more offensive 3:2:1, peak between 8 and 11 metres</td>
<td>1,89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Mainly 6:0 classic Wing player aggressive to 9 metres variable 6:0 (9-10 metres)</td>
<td>1,89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Mainly 6:0; 5:1</td>
<td>Played aggressive 9 metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1:5/ 3:3/2:4 extremely aggressive (the whole tournament) switched quickly between these variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Mainly 6:0 variable 6:0 (9-10 metres), with fast throw-off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Mainly 3:2:1 5:1 with a variable peak at 10 metres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Mainly 3:2:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Mainly 5:1; 6:0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 4, the most commonly played system was 6:0. Although the teams played their defence systems with a lot of variation the trend was an oriented defence between 6 and 9 metres. Taking a look at the team average body height, it comes as no surprise that teams like Austria and Spain chose a more aggressive system, such as 3:2:1 and 3:3 defence. To sum up Table 4, the trend of the top 8 teams is oriented at the adults. Strong and tall players are placed in the middle block working together with the goalkeeper. The wing players are switching between 6 and 9 metres not allowing the offence wing player to receive a pass. The middle block is aggressive towards the ball possessing player and takes over responsibility for the pivot at the same time.

### 3.6. Overview offence play & playing trends

In this part of the analysis, some distinct actions are picked out and described in detail. The focus is placed on what teams played mostly during this tournament. Furthermore, special characteristics of team play of different nations are filtered out so as to get an overview of the general playing trends.

Of course no situation is exactly the same as another. For example, every team plays the empty crossing in a different way. Each time something is a little different. Nevertheless, the following needs to be observed as models allowing a lot of variation in every situation. The tactical tools
most often used in team play that were used were crossing, empty crossing ant the transition on 2 pivots. The following examples explain this in more detail.

For a better understanding, every picture is explained through numbers. The numbers mark the timeline in order to understand what is happening in each step. When several actions occur parallel to one another or a player has more than one option, the particular number is being repeated.

3.7. Cross

Picture 2: Starting action with crossing (figures 1 – 4 refer to the action phases/options)

The most playing actions started at the middle player with crossing. As seen on picture number 2 in the first step no dangerous situation is generated by the back players. At this time they are changing their position with smooth walking. But from time on they are starting with scene number 2 everything has to be done extremely fast. This includes the running paths and the pass play. So the key is the transition from slow to fast movements. As soon as situation 3 is reached it depends on the individual skills of the back players to solve the task. We found this art of playing at all teams.
3.8. Empty crossing

Picture 3: Starting action with empty crossing (figures 1 – 4 refer to the action phases/options)

The middle player passes the ball to the right side and changes his position with the left back. The tactical aim is the same as with normal crossing: the transition from slow to fast has to be achieved at the correct time; otherwise the back player cannot create pressure on the defence. For a successful play the correct attack move towards the defence is important to generate a majority. This method was also observed in all teams.

3.9. Transition to 2 pivots

The transition to two pivots is used in several situations. The teams played it mainly against a 3:2:1 system but also against 6:0 formations or while having the majority.
Starting action with transition to 2 pivots (figures 1 – 3 refer to the action phases/options)

The pivot comes out at 9 metres, receives the pass from the middle player, turns to the other side and gives a pass to the right back. The left back turns into a second pivot at 6 metres.

SLO transition to 2 pivots vs. 3:2:1 defence (figures 1 – 3 refer to the action phases/options)

Picture 5 shows a variation of the Slovenian team against a 3:2:1 defence. Starting with the pivot, he comes out at 9 metres and received the pass from the middle player. Next, he plays the ball to
the left back and returns to 6 metres on the other side. At the same time the middle back turns into a second pivot. With this easy action the peak is forced to retreat back to 7 metres, trying not to allow too much space for the 2 pivots.

![Diagram](image)

Picture 6: GER transition to 2 pivots vs. 6:0 (figures 1 – 6 refer to the action phases/options)

Germany played the transition to 2 pivots with a crossing as the beginning. The left back crosses with the middle player and then turns into the second pivot. The rest is the same as in Picture 5.

Even though playing with 2 pivots is a good way to create throwing positions, it is still not guaranteed to be successful. Exact running trails, passes and a good team coordination is necessary for this tactic to work. Sweden, Denmark and of course Germany have the individual quality to use this situation and score goals. In this kind of attack, the technical and individual skill level of each player determines whether it will be successful or not. The back player must have the ability to make easy goals from outside and the defence has to come to 8 or 9 metres so that the pivot will have more space for his game.
3.10. Examples

Picture 7: Starting action Sweden (figures 1 – 3 refer to the action phases/options)

Sweden’s game was mainly based on, which were perfectly executed. The middle player (Nr. 6) played very good together with the pivot and his back players. To create a majority, they positioned the pivot on the side where the attack would start. As seen in Picture 7, the middle player moves to the left side and then attacks the interface between the centre and the defence player in position 2. Because of the strong back players of Sweden, the defence has to focus on preventing easy goals from 9 metres. At the same time this gives the pivot and the wing players more space to act.
Sweden were able to organise the fast break very easily. The pivot was positioned on the right side, where he blocked the defence player. The rest was simple. Depending on the formation of the defence players, the back court shoots or plays the ball quickly to the next back player. We also saw this combination with crossing and transition on two pivots.

Slovenia played the most fast breaks (59) among the top 8 teams. Spain ranked 2nd with 56 fast breaks, and Germany 3rd with 45.

All the examples were differently interpreted and executed by each nation. Nevertheless, these examples provide an overview of the general way of playing, chosen by the teams.
4. Goalkeepers

The importance of goalkeepers is undisputed. To quantify the performance of a goalkeeper it would be necessary to take into account which defence was played in several situations and how important the game was. When we look at the statistical data, some goalkeepers made a particularly good performance.

In the final, the German goalkeeper played a great match and this fact decisively contributed in Germany’s success of winning the title.

Table 5: Goalkeepers of the top 3 teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Saves/shots</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Playing time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Maier</td>
<td>60/162</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>4:57:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Kraft</td>
<td>67/167</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4:31:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Obling</td>
<td>52/149</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>3:31:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 5, we can see the statistics of the goalkeepers who played the most time for their team. In the Danish team, the goalkeepers were the most counterbalanced. If we compare the playing times of the two Danish goalkeepers, Obling and Poulsen, they had a mere difference of 3 minutes.

Kraft from Sweden was declared as the best goalkeeper of the tournament.

Table 6: The best goalkeepers due to the number of saves and percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Saves/shots</th>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>Playing time</th>
<th>Average saves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kraft</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>67/167</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>4:31:29</td>
<td>9,57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maier</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>60/162</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>4:57:54</td>
<td>8,57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudeck</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>50/134</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>3:02:06</td>
<td>7,14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If we look at Tables 5 and 6, we can see that the best teams also had the best goalkeepers. The same fact is reflected in the goalkeepers’ overall statistics. When we look at the performance of the couples, Germany (110/296, 37%) and Sweden (102/278, 37%) are leading the chart, followed by Romania (113/341, 33%) and Switzerland (96/287, 33%).

The most saves were made by Iancu from Romania, with 87 saves at 253 shots (32%), an average of 12.42 saves.
5. Main observations, final remarks

• Most common played defence system was 6:0.

• The defence systems were often altered to make it harder for the offence players to adapt.

• Transition on 2 pivots, fast breaks and fast throw offs were still used as effective tactical tools.

• A high individual skill level is also required for a team to be successful.

• There is nearly no standardised team play. They were only found in majority or minority.

• The trend of the importance of athletic fitness was once again confirmed.

• The best teams had the best goalkeepers. However, we should not forget that the best teams also had the best defence, making it easier for the goalkeepers to save more shots.

• The trend of strong and variable back players was confirmed. A back player must have the “know how” to play in all back court positions.

• The top 5 teams demonstrated some modern and fast handball. A lot of the teams still have their defence and offence specialists. Although the tempo was high, these players could change without generating a majority for the opponents. Spain were at points very fast, which allowed them an advantage.

• A clear lead is no guarantee to win the game. Quite often a team could lead even by 9 goals at halftime, only to lose the match at the end. For the majority of the teams, it is not possible to compete on a continuously high level for 60 minutes.

• The age of 18 is often seen as the age of talents. From my point of view, this perception is not necessarily right. A lot of Swedish players play in the first team of their clubs and take over main tasks. These young players should be entrusted to play in the highest leagues in their countries.

• In the future, further research should reveal in what ways the teams obtain technical support by analysis: e.g.: which kind of information is used by the trainer, etc. At the moment it is not clear which teams used an analyst and which teams did not.
5.1. The Final

Although Germany lost in the preliminary round against Sweden, they were still able to win the final.

From my point of view, both teams put on high level performances. They both have great players in all positions and a lot of rotating possibilities.

Simon Ernst and Marcel Engels of Germany, and Niklas Kraft and Pontus Zetterman of Sweden were selected in the All Star team.

It was interesting to see how the tactical setting changed in the two games. In the final, Germany played a perfect 3:2:1 with the peak up to 11 metres and gave the strong backcourt of Sweden nearly no chance to score from 9 metres. Sweden’s number 11 and most valuable player in the tournament, Pontus Zettermann (right back), was only able to score twice. In the preliminary round he scored 6 out of 8! The pivot played mainly on the left side to create more space for Zettermann on the right side.

![Diagram of GER 3:2:1 vs. SWE 2 pivots](http://example.com/diagram.png)

Picture 9: GER 3:2:1 vs. SWE 2 pivots (figures 1 – 3 refer to the action phases/options)
In Picture 10, Sweden play a transition to 2 pivots with the centre back. Germany’s peak returned to 7 metres and generated more density in the middle block. The forth defender attacks the ball possessing player at 9 metres. Germany were able to defend this transition perfectly. This was Sweden’s main tactical strategy. The picture also demonstrates how early the right back got attacked.

Sweden often started with 1:1 situation to force a majority or a good throwing position. Because of the agility of the German defence, this proved not to be the right way to go.

In the offence, the situation was completely different compared to the first match in the preliminary round. The German back players produced a lot of pressure with a fast pass play and scored easy goals from 9 metres and with breakthroughs. On the other side, Sweden played a slow ball and were not able to score easy goals from the back court. As it is seen in Picture 10, Germany often tried to play a double cross as a starting action to attack the interface.

It seemed that Germany’s tactical concept was improving game by game. Maybe this fact is connected to the technical support who provided the coach with important information. Either way, Germany seemed to learn game by game.
The second half was rather balanced between the two teams. In the end only one goal made the difference (30:29).

In the two matches where Germany and Sweden played against each other, no big discrepancies were observed in the performance of the two teams. Compared to the first match, the German defence was a little more aggressive in the second game, and the offence was a little faster, scoring from 9 metres with the basis in extended fast break. Sweden were defensively more passive (defended between 6 and 8 metres) and offensively a little more static compared to the preliminary round. It is interesting to see how small changes can influence a whole game.
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