XII MEN’s EHF EUROPEAN HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP, 2016, Poland

Qualitative analysis

INTRODUCTION

The 2016 Men’s EHF European Handball Championship (Men’s EHF EURO; MECH) was organized by the Polish Handball Federation in Poland, between 15 and 31 January, 2016.

The preliminary round matches were held in four Polish cities as follows: Krakow, Katowice, Wroclaw, and Gdansk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Krakow (A)</th>
<th>Katowice (B)</th>
<th>Wroclaw (C)</th>
<th>Gdansk (D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>DEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POL</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>RUS</td>
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<tr>
<td>MKD</td>
<td>BLR</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>HUN</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRB</td>
<td>ISL</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>MNE</td>
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In each group every team played against the others (3 matches per group). The 4th ranked teams in the preliminary round travelled home after their third match. The first three teams of groups A and B, as well as C and D formed two groups in the main round. The teams brought with them the results achieved in the preliminary rounds against each other, and the final score evolved when they played three matches against the teams of the other group.

The first two teams of the main rounds got into the semi final where they played crosswise against the teams of the opposite group. Then the winners went for the gold medal, and the losers for the bronze one. Teams finished on the third and fourth places played against each other for the ranking 5-8, while rankings 9-16 were figured out by the teams’ results achieved during the EHF European Championship.
Not only the European Champion title, the silver and bronze medals, and good rankings were at stake, but also the achievement of the very important Olympic qualification for two other European teams. In addition to the 6 European countries already qualified for the Olympic Games due to their results in the World Championship, the two best teams of the MECH obtained the right of Olympic participation.

Attendance of the matches was excellent. Tauron Arena Kraków hosted matches with full house for 6 days, i.e. 15 000 spectators encouraged the teams in extremely good athmosphere. There was almost full house also in the other venues, with the local and foreign fans supporting the teams. Especially many Danish fans arrived to Gdansk, and German fans to Wroclaw to encourage their own team. Prior to this event, there were never so many people at the preliminary and the main rounds, their number exceeded 180 000, and the number of the total audience were more than 400 000. 175 countries broadcast the matches all over the world.

The organization of the MECH was excellent. Service and catering of the teams as well as the official persons was absolutely satisfying. Thanks for those who worked perfectly for 16 days for a smooth organisation of the tournament.

The matches took place in extremely fair athmosphere, and also, the mood at the substitution benches was outstandigly positive.

The level of the whole tournament was high, and there was not any team whose performance did not serve the positive judgement of handball.

During the first week of the European Championship, European Master Coaches and Licence Renewal Courses were held.
RESULTS AND PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>AV. RESULT</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31:27</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29:29</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>30:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>DEN</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>28:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>POL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28:28</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>RUS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>BLR</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28:32</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>MKD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>HUN</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24:28</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>ISL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22:24</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>SRB</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27:31</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>MNE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instead of AUT and CZE in 2014, now GER and SLO qualified for the European Championship.
This time the two finalists of the previous EURO (DEN, FRA) were playing only for rank 5, while ESP and CRO continued being among the best four teams.

As last time, every team got points, except MNE.

Certainly, GER as winner of the tournament caused the greatest surprise, it can be called „coup de théâtre”.

The young NOR team was most appreciated too. 2 years ago they had to depart after 3 matches. This year, having had the most scores in the main round, they managed to get into the semi final.

**Difference amongst the teams by results**

Games finished with a difference in the number of goals

- Draw (0) = 5
- 1 = 8
- 2 = 9
- 3 = 3
- 4-6 = 10
- 7-9 = 7
- 10 and more = 5

48 games, 22 finished just with maximum of 2 goals difference!

On the average, the most goal difference was only 4 scores (CRO, FRA) which indicates well the close final results of the matches (this number was 7 in 2014).

The home national team (POL) was expected to finish at a much better place than 7.

After the home European Championship in 2012, this was the second time for SRB to drop out following the preliminary rounds, together with MNE.

Among the four national teams that had to leave the tournament after the preliminary round there were three from former Yugoslavia (MNE, SRB, SLO).
HUN and ISL provided unusual weak performance and subsequently they finished at places 12 and 13.

RUS got the ninth place and this rank indicates again the improvement of this national team. They were playing extremely well during several matches.

Achievements of ESP and FRA were variable. Both of these teams were very strong. However, after some matches of power demonstration their performance became weaker which led to defeat.

Negative goal difference took place only downward from ranking place ten, 5 was the biggest, that happened in the case of MNE.

During MECH 2016 the national teams played 48 matches and scored 2629 goals from 4428 shots. The average was 55/92 per match, i.e. the teams scored 28 goals from 46 shots – 59 % efficiency (in 2014 this rate was 28/48, i.e. almost the same as this year).

most goals:  
BLR-ISL  39:38 = 73  
NOR-CRO 34:31 = 65  
CRO-POL  37:23 = 60

fewest goals:  
SWE-HUN  22:14 = 36  
GER-ESP   24:17 = 41  
SWE-SLO   23:21 = 44

**Coaches**

Number of foreign national coaches:

2014 MECH/DEN:  2

2016 MECH/POL:  7

Countries that changed their national team coach since MECH/DEN 2014 to MECH/POL 2016: CRO, HUN, DEN, SRB, NOR, RUS, MNE
Instead of AUT and CZE in 2014, GER and SLO participated in 2016 and they also changed their national coaches for foreign ones.

2016 MECH/POL: from 16 teams 9 played with new coaches. From the 16 participants there were 9 coaches, who at the same time, worked in club and national teams as well, in different countries!

2016 MECH/POL Ranking 1-5 teams: 4 domestic, 1 foreign coach
11-16 teams: 4 foreign, 2 domestic coach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nr of players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abroad

most: MNE 16, SRB 15,

ISL, CRO, SWE 12-12

SLO 11, MKD 10

Countries of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, i.e. MNE, SRB, CRO, SLO, MKD: 64 players from 143!

fewest: GER 1, HUN 2, FRA 3
U23

most: GER 6, MNE 5
fewest: DEN 0, RUS, ESP, MKD, POL, ISL 1-1

Over 30

most: POL 9, MKD 8,
    ISL, ESP, FRA 6-6
fewest: GER 1, CRO, BLR 2-2

The 16 team of the MECH consisted of 256 players, from which 143 (56%) play abroad and 113 (44%) at home.

Age of the players

under 23: 41 (15%)
over 30: 69 (27%)
between 23 and 30: 147 (58%)

On the average,

- a team consisted of 9 players who played abroad and 7 who played at home
- from the 16 players 2 were under 23, 4 over 30 and 10 between 23 and 30 years
- the average age of the goalkeepers was 31.5 but some of them were close to 40 years: Sterbik (ESP), Omeyer (FRA), Szmal (POL), M. Andersson (SWE), Stanic (SRB), Skof (SLO)
Average international matches played/player

most:  
FRA 91  
DEN 87  
ESP 87  
POL 84

fewest:  
GER 36(!)  
CRO 63  
NOR 64

**Offence**

On the average, the teams scored 28 goals from 46 shots per matches.

2014/DEN - ranking of the teams by scored goals was equal to the final result of the tournament.

1  FRA 32  
2  DEN 31  
3  ESP 30  
4  CRO 29

2016/POL – the number of scored goals did not actually determine the final result.

3  CRO 31  
5  FRA 30  
4  NOR 29

1, 6, 7, 10 – GER, DEN, POL, BLR 28-28
Teams with fewer scored goals could not expect good rankings.

2014/DEN

10 MKD 23
13 SRB 24
15 CZE 24
16 MNE 22

2016/POL

14 SLO 22
12 HUN 24
8, 16 SWE, MNE 25-25

- when in numerical inferiority there were many teams which were able to get some compensation for their disadvantageous situation temporarily by substituting the goalkeeper and/or some of the other players

- attack of the teams became even simpler and more similar to each other, however, good decisions of the players, forming good positions for shots, and brilliant individual performances determined the efficiency of the attacks

- the basic system was as follows: two wingers in the corner of the court, and the right and left back players close to the side line

- during attacks FRA applied several times two line players permanently

- there were really simple combinations: transition from wings, middle back crosses of the pivots, crosses between back court players (single or double) including variations
- in offence generally the teams played as follows:

a) wing transition to the other side between the wing and the second defender
b) middle back crossed the pivot, pivot passed the other side for back court player and continues with one or two pivots
c) without ball, position of the left/right back was changed with the middle back, and the ball arrived from the other side

**Scored goals**

**Back position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>803 goals/1752 shots – 46%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 goals/36 shots/match, 8/18/match/team</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>most:</th>
<th>fewest:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(6) DEN 11 (46%)</td>
<td>(2) ESP 6 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) HUN 10 (45%)</td>
<td>(11) MKD 6 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) CRO 8.5 (50%)</td>
<td>(14) SLO 4 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) NOR 8.5 (46%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) GER 8 (51%)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- most efficient: GER 51%, CRO and POL 50-50%
- less efficient: ESP 36%, SLO 36, BLR and MNE 41-41%

The few scored goals and bad efficiency of ESP were unexpected.

**Fast break**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>387 goals/510 attempts – 76%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 goals/10 attempts/match, 4/5/match/team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
most: fewest:
(5) FRA 7 (77%) (16) MNE 1 (100%)
(3) CRO 6.5 (83%) (12) HUN 2.5 (57%)
(4) NOR 4.5 (79%) (9) RUS 3 (73%)
(11) MKD 4.5 (73%) (15) SRB 3 (64%)

- number of the scored goals by fast break has stagnated since 2012
- while in 2014 the most efficient teams were the best ones, this did not hold true in 2016
- national teams with few scored goals by fast break finished at ranks 9-16
- the teams got 30 scored goals by fast throw-off, which was on the average 0.6 per match and since this number was equal to 1 goal per 3 matches it cannot be considered significant at all

Half of the scored goals by fast throw-offs were gained by CRO (10) and NOR (5).

6m centre shots

total: 446 goals from 678 shots – 66%
10/14/match, 5/7/match/team

most: fewest:
(13) ISL 7 (69%) (4) NOR 3 (77%)
(9) RUS 6 (73%) (11) MKD 3 (50%)
(8) SWE 5.5 (66%) (15) SRB 4 (58%)
(14) SLO 6 (61%)
(1) GER 5 (58%)
(2) ESP 5 (62%)
(5) FRA 5 (65%)

- there was not significant difference between the teams concerning the number of scored goals by the pivots
- taking into consideration the final results, the rate of the goals in this category was not significant
- the relatively low efficiency (66%) is interesting; on the one hand, the players made a lot of mistakes, on the other hand, goalkeepers prevented many goals attempted by line players

**Wing shots**

total: 481 goals from 816 shots – 59%
10/17/match, 5/8.5/team/match

most: fewest:
(1) GER 7 (62%) (12) HUN 2.5 (50%)
(2) ESP 6.5 (64%) (16) MNE 3 (63%)
(9) RUS 6 (73%) (15) SRB 3 (43%)
(11) MKD 6 (55%)

- GER and ESP, the two finalists had excellent wing players: V. Rivera (ESP) became the best scorer of the tournament, and T. Reichmann (GER) was chosen the best right wing player
- perhaps the strongest position of RUS and MKD were at the wings: Dibirov, Shishkarev, Kovalev (RUS), Manaskov and Georgievski (MKD)
- in this position the performances of HUN, MNE, and SRB were quite weak
- shot efficiency was not satisfying enough

**Breakthroughs**

total: 198 goals from 240 shots – 83%
4/5/match, 2/2.5/match/team

most: fewest:
(15) SRB 6 (100%) (2) ESP 0.75 (67%)
(4) NOR 4 (76%) (12) HUN 0.8 (100%)
(7) POL 3.5 (83%) (6) DEN 1 (90%)
- the number of the scored goals by breakthroughs did not influence the final result
- the weak performances of ESP, DEN and HUN were surprising
- players arriving vigorously in a good position were efficient enough

7m penalty shot

total: 284 goals from 388 shot – 73%
   6/8/match, 3/4/team/match

most: fewest:
(3)ESP 4.5 (80%) (6) DEN 2 (93%)
(1)GER 3.5 (90%) (16) MNE 1 (100%)
(7) POL 2.5 (72%)
- there was not a big difference amongst the teams
- unfortunately, due to the lack of detailed statistics, it cannot be traced what kind of action or position resulted in penalty.

Distribution of the goals by position

The average of 28 scored goals was distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>back position:</td>
<td>8, 29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast break:</td>
<td>4, 14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6m centre shot:</td>
<td>5, 18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wing shot:</td>
<td>5, 18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breakthrough:</td>
<td>2, 7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7m penalty:</td>
<td>3, 11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- as compared to the MECH 2014, the number of scored goals by breakthroughs decreased by 2%
- the number of goals from pivot position and wings showed a further increase
- even prior to 2016, the number of scored goals by fast breaks was few and this number became less (by 1%)


Turnovers

total: 992/48 matches
21/match, 10.5/match/team 2014/DEN: 11/match/team

- the teams made almost the same technical faults, close to the average
- the number of the technical faults showed little change as compared to 2014

The best goalscorers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>actions</th>
<th>7m shots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. V. Rivera (ESP) 48</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. T. Reichmann (GER) 46</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. K. Bjørnsen (NOR) 45</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. M. Strlek (CRO) 43</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. K. Lazarov (MKD) 42</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. B. Pukhouski (BLR) 37</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. K. Bielecki (POL) 34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. M. Jurecki (POL) 34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. L. Hansen (NOR) 33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. M. Hansen (DEN) 33</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- though POL was the only nation with two players among the top ten goalscorers, this was not enough to reach a good ranking
- the first four players were wingers, and all of them were members of the teams ranked 1-4 (GER, ESP, CRO, NOR)
- most action goals were shot by the backs, except two wingers
- this time no FRA players of the previous MECH like N. Karabatic, D. Narcisse, L. Abalo were among the top players
- from the top ten assist providers, only M. Hansen (DEN) got into the group of the best goalscorers
- Canellas, Rutenka, and Maqueda were missing among the best goalscorers and assist providers
- in addition to Duvnjak (CRO) – 66 and M. Hansen (DEN) – 38, there were some new players among the best assist providers, as follows:

- 4 of the ten best goalscorers, and 5 of the best assist providers were members of the best four teams

**Attacks in numerical superiority**

total: 381 goals from 613 shots – 62%
   8/13/match, 4/6.5/team/match

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>most:</th>
<th>fewest:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5) FRA 5.5 (62%)</td>
<td>(6) DEN 3 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) ESP 5 (60%)</td>
<td>(10) BLR 3 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) MKD 5.5 (72%)</td>
<td>(9) RUS 3 (54%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Position attacks**

total: 2212 goals from 4429 shots – 50%
   46/92/match, 23/46/team/match

<table>
<thead>
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<th>most:</th>
<th>fewest:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) GER 25 (53%)</td>
<td>(12) HUN 21 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) NOR 24 (55%)</td>
<td>(14) SLO 19 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) CRO 24 (53%)</td>
<td>(16) MNE 22 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) DEN 24 (52%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) ESP 22 (49%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) FRA 22.5 (49%)</td>
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</table>

- among the teams with the same number of players against organised defending teams, those were the most successful and most efficient that ended up on ranks 1-6
- teams on worse ranks scored less goals than the average and also, their efficiency was less than 50%
Defence

conceded goals

There were 28 goals conceded per match per team.

fewest: most:
(8) SWE 24 (13) ISL 33
(1) GER 25 (10) BLR 32
(2) ESP 26 (15) SRB 31
(5) FRA 26 (16) MNE 30

- teams with a lot of goals conceded did not finish at good places
- those with less goals conceded, however, with less scored goals did not get into the top final ranks
- indicators for the goals conceded and scored of FRA (5) and DEN (6) were better than those of ESP (2) and NOR (4), whose goal difference was equal
- the goal difference in the cases of ESP and NOR was influenced by the great extent of their defeat (7-7) in the two final matches
- the goal difference of the teams at the ranks downwards from RUS (9) was negative, i.e. they conceded more goals than scored

Goalkeepers’ performance

The average performance of the goalkeepers was 30% efficiency in 2016, which decreased by 1% as compared to 2014/DEN.

most: least:
(5) FRA 36% (13) ISL 24%
(9) RUS 34% (15) SRB 25%
(1) GER 33% (11) MKD 25%
(8) SWE 33%
(2) ESP 32%

- the above-mentioned teams are – except RUS and MKD – equal to the teams with the least and the most goals conceded subsequently
- The goalkeepers’ performance certainly affected the number of the goals conceded.
- The differences among the individual goalkeeper’s performances were not significant, only 4% (37-33%) in case of the first 10 teams.
- Disregarding that the NOR goalkeeper played 3 matches (47%) only in 2014, the data of the previous MECH was the same in 2016 (37-33%).

Goalkeepers with the most saves:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Saves</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Wolff (Ger, 1)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Saldatsenka (BLR, 10)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Omeyer (FRA, 5)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Landin (DEN, 6)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Sterbik (ESP, 2)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

7m penalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Fewest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOR 42</td>
<td>DEN 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER 40</td>
<td>HUN 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRO 36</td>
<td>RUS 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKD 19</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Teams at good ranks, whose defence was tough but not 'brutal', got more 2m suspension penalties than those finishing at worse ranks.

**Blocked shots and steals**

**Blocked shots**

- Total: 241/48 matches
- 5/match, 2.5/team/match
most:       fewest:          
(1) GER 26/8     (6) DEN 8/7  
(3) CRO 26/8     (12) HUN 8/6 
(4) NOR 24/8     (10) BLR 6/6 
(8) SWE 24/7     
(2) ESP 23/8

individual:
 Gojun (CRO) 10
 Guardiola (ESP) 9
 Lemke (GER) 12
 Karlsson (SWE) 10

Steals

total: 317/48 matches
  6.6/match, 3.3/team/match

most:       fewest:          
(5) FRA 39/7     (8) SWE 14/7  
(3) CRO 36/8     (10) BLR 14/6 
(6) DEN 31/7     (12) HUN 16/6 
(1) GER 30/8     
(2) ESP 30/8

individual:
 Duvnjak (CRO) 10
 Dahmke (GER) 7
 Lemke (GER) 6
 L. Karabatic (FRA) 6
 Mahé (FRA) 6

- among the teams blocking the best and getting the ball, GER, SWE, ESP, 
  DEN and FRA conceded the less goals – of course, with the help of good 
  goalkeepers
- FRA and CRO stole the most balls and, as a result, they shot the most 
  goals by fast throw-offs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>B.S.</th>
<th>St</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>Av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 GER</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ESP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 CRO</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 NOR</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 FRA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 DEN</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- the chart above shows how many times the best teams were able to prevent the shots of the opposite teams by blocks and steals. This ranking is the same as the final result of the championship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>B.S.</th>
<th>St</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>Av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 RUS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 BLR</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 MKD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 HUN</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- in most cases the 10-16 ranked teams made less successful blocks and steals (except NOR and RUS)

**Defence**

15 from the 16 teams chose the defence system 6:0, and from time to time this system was replaced by the defence system 5:1 (by 10 teams).

Sometimes SWE and FRA were playing the defence system 4:2 or 4+2 condensed on one side of the court against the winger and back players, this way tightening the room for attacks.

6 teams used the mixed defence system 5+1, mainly against MKD (Lazarov), and MKD, if it was not possible to change Lazarov during defence.

SLO used the 3:2:1 open defence system, however this was not successful.
FRA, DEN, and SRB were playing the defence systems 6:0, 5:1, 3:2:1, 5+1, and 4:2, sometimes even during one attack of the opposing team.

Flexible and transformable defence depended on the offence tactics of the opponent team (e.g. ESP 5:1, transition of back court player, transformed the defence to 5+1).

**Numerical inferiority**

SLO and SRB used a 4:1 system without significant success.

It was difficult to identify the defence system of some teams. Instead of rigid forms the players performed anticipatory actions during the matches and had quite a great degree of freedom.

In general, most teams substituted 1 or 2 players during defences and attacks as well, whereas MKD and ESP sometimes changed 3-3 players.

**Numerical superiority**

Depending on the effectiveness, the teams used 5:1, 5+1, 4:2, or 6:0.

**FINDINGS AND EVALUATION**

- Young players revolted against the stars! Reform and rejuvenation of the teams usually start after the Olympic games. Quite surprisingly, this year 3 (GER, CRO, NOR) from the first 4 teams arrived to Poland with many young players and they became very successful leaving the former successful teams (FRA, DEN, POL) behind.

- The teams of the second main round between the second and third playing day had less than 24 hours to take some rest and make preparations for the next matches, which was disadvantageous for them as compared to the teams of the first round.
BEST FOUR TEAMS

4th place: NOR

In 2014 NOR finished the European Championship after 3 matches. This team however, even then had remarkable players who played the main roles with regard to the success. S. Sagosen became the best middle back of the tournament, and in addition to his scored goals he organized the matches excellently. The Norwegian back players and wingers shot lots of goals. However, the team did not have appropriate substitutes for some positions. They scored many goals, but they conceded the most goals among the best teams as well. In the preliminary round they were beaten by one goal at a very close match, in the main round they were not defeated, however, they became tired for the finals. As compared to the best teams, the Norwegian goalkeepers’ performance was a little behind expectation. Interesting enough that B. Myrhol who used to be substituted in defence while he played an important role in attacks, became the key player in defence and played less in attacks.

3rd place: CRO

CRO arrived to Poland with a new coach and with several new players. They finished on the 6th place last time, so this time they were very motivated. The team showed a ‘Janus’ face: in the main round FRA won against them by 8 goals, but then CRO defeated the host POL by 14(!) goals. According to their traditions, the wingers shot lots of goals, almost 100 from the total 250. As pivot, M. Maric (32 scored goals) proved to be one of the best players in this position. As usual, D. Duvnjak played extremely well both in attack and defence. I. Karacic played a good substitute. In back position, I. Sliskovic played excellently, and M. Kopljar shot also a lot of goals. The young Croatian players seem to be promising for their national team. The team got the 3rd place confidently, they defeated NOR by 7 goals. Goalkeeper I. Stevanovic performed well, leaving his famous colleague, M. Alilovic behind. Usually, CRO played the defence system 5:1, with Duvnjak in front, who stole the most balls in defence during the MECH.
2nd place: ESP

ESP arrived again with a very strong team. They started to play confidently and seemed to be well underway. In the preliminary round, they had a draw with SLO. In the main round, first they ruled the match against DEN, then they were defeated by 4 goals. In the semi final ESP played better than CRO undoubtedly, however, in the final they were defeated by GER by 7 goals, and scored only 17 goals. ESP performed unevenly and showed also a ’Janus’ face: after convincing wins some unexpected defeats happened. In attack, their play was behind their usual performance: there was only 4 teams from the 16 that scored less average goals than ESP (26)! On the other hand, their defence was remarkable and there were only 3 teams with less average goals conceded. They shot less goals than used to, especially from breakthroughs and fast breaks. Their wingers played better than the average, and the goalkeepers’ performance was also very good. The Spanish team used mainly the defence system 5:1. The best scorer of the MECH 2016 became V. Rivera (48 goals).

1st place: GER

GER arrived with a new coach and with several new players, too. Their 1st place was surprising. However, they deserved it absolutely. Interesting, that they played the first and last match against ESP. Their first match was lost by 3 goals, but the last was won by 7 goals. This was a huge improvement in 2 weeks’ time! During the MECH, GER became better and better in attack and defence as well. They lost the first match, but then won 7 matches, and became the champion. In the German team there were 6 young players under 23 years, and there was only 1 over 30. They won the matches usually by a small goal difference (except against HUN and ESP), however, their play was always very disciplined and determined, and there were some extremely good individual performances. Against RUS, two German key players were lost because of injury, but their substitutions were also very motivated and they performed excellently. The basis of the GER success was the brilliant goalkeepers’ performance: A. Wolff became the best goalkeeper of the tournament. The two best defenders were F. Lemke and H. Pekeler, and both of them, as well as the whole team, played very well together with the goalkeeper in the defence system 6:0. The most efficient
The player of the team was T. Reichmann (46). The backs played very effectively, and also the wingers were outstandingly efficient.

Technical and tactical novelties

**technique**

- pass to the pivot, then to the winger behind his back, sometimes between the legs, bounce pass to the opposite direction of the shooting hand

- breakthrough to the opposite side of the shooting hand: the player counter-moves his shooting hand behind the defender, then, on the closer side of the defender to the side line he tries to prepare his body for a shot

**tactics**

- GER: free throw from 9m line in a good position for a shot. Sudden change of a player and the goalkeeper. Together the new player 3 or 4 blocks for the back who tries to use the numerical superiority: to shoot with the help of a block or to make a pass to the winger or the pivot, then followed by an immediate change of the substitutes. This brings a surprise because the opposite team has no time to prepare itself.

- ESP, CRO: the right winger gets the ball in the middle of the field by fast throw-off, and by attacking the left side he tries to fight out numerical superiority through a breakthrough

**advantages** - with two line players

a) 1 line player on both sides between the wings and second defenders (FRA)

b) 1 line player between the wing and second defender. 1 pivot on the other side between the second and third defender, trying to use the man advantage on this side.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRA (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>B. Kounkoud</td>
<td>RW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L. Fabregas</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N. Remili</td>
<td>RB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKD (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>F. Kuzmanovski</td>
<td>LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRB (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D. Dukic</td>
<td>RW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRO (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>L. Sebetic</td>
<td>RB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M. Mamic</td>
<td>LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLR (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>A. Khadkevich</td>
<td>PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V. Kulesh</td>
<td>LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V. Saldatsenka</td>
<td>GK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S. Konradsson</td>
<td>PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L. Nilsson</td>
<td>LB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>F. Wiede</td>
<td>RB</td>
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<tr>
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<td>J. Kohlbacher</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R. Dahmke</td>
<td>LW</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLO (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>B. Blagotinsek</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUN (3)</td>
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<td>B. Faluvégi</td>
<td>PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNE (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>M. Vujovic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V. Borozan</td>
<td>LB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Players who have realized their talents since 2014 MECH/DEN (players for the future then):

FRA: V. Porte
SRB: N. Zelenovic
POL: K. Syprzak
MKD: D. Manaskov
    G. Georgievski
SWE: M. Zahrisson
    A. Nielsson
CRO: I. Sliskovic
HUN: G. Ancsin
ISL: A. Palmarsson
    O. Gudmunsson
NOR: H. Reinkind
    K. Tonnessen
    G. Sagosen
    Ch. O’Sullivan
ESP: G. Perez de Vargas

16 players from the selected 22 in 2014 participated in POL 2016 with their national team.
All star team

GK: A. Wolff (GER)   Best scorer: V. Rivera (ESP)
LW: M. Strlek (CRO)   MVP: R. Enterrios (ESP)
LB: M. Jurecki (POL)   Best defender: H. Mollgaard (DEN)
CB: S. Sagosen (NOR)
LP: J. Aguinagalde (ESP)
RB: J. Jakobsson (SWE)
RW: T. Reichmann (GER)

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND TRENDS

- Since 56% of the players are contracted with foreign club teams, the training of the national teams has become even more difficult.

- As the age of the teams is concerned, it is clear that the teams finished at the first and at the last place (GER, MNE) had the most youngest players under 23 years, and GER, CRO and BLR had the fewest players above 30.

- The age of 58% of the players was between 23 and 30 years.

- FRA and DEN, the two former finalists, got ranks 5 and 6 in 2016.

- In general, the results of the matches as well as the rankings were determined by small differences among the teams.

- Several teams showed a ’double-face’: there were big differences in their performances during certain matches (FRA, POL, DEN, ESP).

- Teams finishing at the 1-4 places were extremely efficient in scoring from the wings.
As compared to the previous MECH (2014), this time the teams used much more defence systems and several times changed them even during one attack, which was surprising.

The first four teams arrived with several new players and acquainted the handball world with new names. These new players performed extremely well, which was one of the main reasons of the success – in addition, of course, to the performance of their good and powerful team-mates.

The performance of the teams were determined by their ambition, and acquisition of the qualification for the Olympic games happened in an extra contest (HUN, MKD, BLR, RUS, SWE, NOR) – finally NOR and SWE won.

FRA, DEN and POL only lost their last match in the main round, and that caused that they had missed the semi final.

SWE, CRO, BLR and FRA arrived with several young players whose performance will provide a good basis for their teams’ success in the future.

The atmosphere of the MECH was excellent and fair, both on court and in the substitution area. There was not any penalty for any lack of discipline. The players received stimulation and confidence from the substitution bench.

The teams blocked well and stole most of the balls in the first part of the tournament.


Teams with a negative goal difference did not expect good rankings.

To my mind, the extreme motivation was advantageous for some teams (GER, CRO, NOR).

From my point of view, the level of this European Championship was extraordinarily high and the teams played excellent matches in full arenas. The organization and settlement of the tournament took place at the same
high level. Many thanks for the Polish Organizing Committee and the staff of the EHF!

- During 2 weeks 175 countries broadcast the 48 matches all over the world, and television became again the best advertising tool for our sport!

February, 2016

Péter Kovács

EHF/MC