The Defensive Performance in Handball – Analysis of the three first-placed teams in Men’s European Championship 2006

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Introduction
The defensive performance in handball is considered as one of the most important team efficiency factors. However, the majority of notational studies still focus on game offensive process, limiting the information about defence to few performance indicators. Therefore, this study aims to analyse and describe the Defensive Process (DP) of the best European teams, classified in three first places in the Men’s European Championship 2006.

Material and Methods
In total, 23 matches were analysed (France - 8, Denmark – 8 and Spain - 7). A specific computer program (ORAND) was created to register a total of 1854 defensive actions from 1042 DP. The 68 defensive performance indicators were grouped in 9 categories: defensive process duration, time of the game, game result, player, defensive action, defensive zone, process result, defensive system, phase of game. Data was analysed through descriptive statistic.

Results
The main conclusion drawn from this study was that all teams had some characteristics in common, as well as distinctive particularities. In common was registered the high defensive efficiency: France - 55,6%, Spain - 51,7% and Denmark - 47% and, particularly, the high goalkeeper efficiency: France - 46,4%, Spain - 54% and Denmark - 52,5%.
These three teams had a high percentage of their DP in position defence phase: France - 77,2%, Spain - 74,7% and Denmark - 81%. Interruption of ball circulation with fault was the defensive action with highest frequency of registers: France - 35,2% of all defensive action, Spain - 27,5% and Denmark - 37,6%.
The failure percentage in 1x1 was the most frequent reason for the defensive failure: France - 16,2% of all defensive actions; Spain - 22,3% and Denmark - 17,5%.
The defensive success was essentially associated with the interception ability: Interceptions represented 5,4% of all defensive action of France, 6,0% of Spain and 5,1% of Denmark.
The capability to interfere with the opponent-shot was represented by frequency of blocs and shot pressure percentage. France used blocks in 4,3% and shot pressure 12,6% of all defensive action; Spain in 4,3% and 12,7% and Denmark in 2,9% and 10,2%, respectively.
The most important difference between the teams was the diversified interpretation of the defensive system of each one. The dominant defensive system of France was 5:1, during 64,3% of the DP. Spain and Denmark used the 6:0 with 40,8% and 45,6% respectively. Although Spain and Denmark used the same defence system, they had a very unique realization of the schematic figures. Spain used the second’s defenders of the 6:0, to press the opponents’ throwers; Denmark made this pressing with the central players. The French advanced centre player made a large pressing under the playmaker and the back centre player had the best block percentage.
The results suggest that for assessment of defence play of teams it is necessary to consider their particular defence organization.

References
http://activities.eurohandball.com/?mode=104&ctrl=11&id1=457&id2=458&id3=472