

## WOMEN U17 EUROPEAN HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP – SLOVAKIA QUALITATIVE TREND ANALYSIS

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*Review paper*

### **Abstract**

*The paper is dealing with qualitative trend analysis on women U17 European handball championship in Slovakia. In the teams qualitative analysis we concentrated to the performance of 6 teams (FRA, ESP, NED, RUS, SRB, DEN). From our point of view, within the possibilities to choose the team players, implementation of the defensive and attacking playing systems of these teams were the most progressive in this age category. Each team out of the "Top 6 teams" had at least one excellent back player who was great in shooting from longer distances. Based at high shooting effectiveness from the back player area, also shooting effectiveness in the gradual attack was rather high (55%). Only Serbia and Russia used smaller number of combinations and used more individual improvisational skills of the players. Netherlands, Norway and Denmark used the system of the "quick centre", the rest of the teams used this startling type of the attack sporadically. Each of the teams of the "Top 6 ECh" disposed with 2-3 defensive systems, most frequently 6:0 and 5:1. Behavior of the players in defense was very correct, players belonging to the Top 6 teams of this tournament were technically on a high level quality (the average number of exclusions in the "ECh Top 6" teams was 4). Each team possessed one specialist player – defender, usually it was the middle defender. The most apparent difference in the effectiveness of the goalkeepers of the "ECh Top 6" and other teams was in catching effectiveness from the area of back player (51%).*

**Key words:** *handball, attacking phase, defensive phase, goalkeeper*

### **Introduction**

According to Mr. Havlíček (1978), the basic criterion of a team's sport performance is its top performance in a particular sport. Therefore, crucial performance of a handball team is that which is achieved in a regular match. We call it a team's playing performance in a match. Based on this, it is imperative for a coach to thoroughly analyze a team's playing performance as it shows the results of his training efforts. A team's performance in sports games, specifically its identification and evaluation has been a long-term matter in the world of sports. The team is being monitored by their activity, which can have a substantial influence on the course of a match and especially on its final result. The issue of evaluating a team's playing performance in handball is included in the works of many authors: Táborský (1989), Langhof (1996), Hianik (2002), Táborský, Tůma (2004), Hianik (2005), Táborský, Tůma (2006) and Hianik (2007). The Women 17 European Championship (ECh) took place from June 29 till July 07, 2007 in Slovakia. Matches of the 16 participating teams were held in Bratislava, in the sports hall Sibamac Aréna NTC and in the sports hall Pasienky. 56 games were played totally. In the term of team performance, the most balanced were the qualification groups A and D. Out of these two groups, only teams of Croatia and Norway did not qualify to the main group.

However their sport performance has surely been a contribution to the ECh. In the course of ten days, each team has played 7 matches, thus representing high playing load. Some of the matches at the close of the ECh therefore did not achieve the excellent level of the matches played in the qualification groups due to fatigue and injuries of the best players. Taking into consideration the summer vacation, number of spectators within the matches was enough to satisfy. Most of the matches were played in front of 300-600 spectators; finals were watched by 1100 spectators. In the teams qualitative analysis we concentrated to the performance of 6 teams (FRA, ESP, NED, RUS, SRB, DEN). From our point of view, within the possibilities to choose the team players, implementation of the defensive and attacking playing systems of these teams were the most progressive in this age category.

### **Results**

W17 EURO 2007

Table 1. Standings after main round

GROUP M1			GROUP M2		
	pts	diff.		pts	diff.
RUS	6	13	NED	6	35
FRA	4	4	ESP	4	-8
DEN	2	7	SRB	2	-8

## Ranking W17 EURO 2007

1 – FRA	2 - ESP	3 - NED
4 – RUS	5 – SRB	6 – DEN

FRA was excellent in very movable defence system 5:1. Frontal player was defending in 12-14 m distance from the team's own goal; all defending players were using brilliant moving technique, which resulted in winning the Fair Play price of the ECh. The winning team of the championship played very good in the first and the second wave of counter-attack. The power of the team was in the very good organized gradual attack laid in the simple combination system mostly consisting of the additional player running into the pivot's space, followed by excellently handled individual activity or co-operation with pivot. Selection of quick and dynamic player types is a precondition of the high performance of this team in the future. ESP was successful mainly because of very good handling with two defence systems.

The defence system 6:0 was realised with the excellent central block; and the defending system 3:2:1 was realised with extremely active ball direction movement. The gradual attack was managed as simple combinations followed by perfectly handled feint motion. NED is probably a team of the future. The team's performance is well balanced, maybe only the pivot's performance was evidently better than the rest of her teammates. The team played mainly defence system 6:0, from which not only the first and the second wave of counter attack were realised but also the "quick centre". The strength of the team was in almost mechanical cooperation within the gradual attack and in cooperation with the pivot. RUS marked as one of the competition favorites. They produce 6:0 defence system and protuberant active defence system 5:1, where the base position of the players defending at the back line of the defence system was placed at the free throw line. Strong weapon of the team was second wave of the counter attack mostly finished with the shot from the area of back player, very often from standing position. The team played counter attack also when they played with one player less. In the gradual attack the team played simple combination based on run of additional player to the area of pivot. Low level of improvisation was a weakness of the team, as well as the right-handed player in a position of the right back player. SRB was a surprise of the tournament. The team's play was based on the 6:0 defence system; the second wave of counter attack and high level of improvisation following basic attack combinations. In gradual attack, the team was strong mainly in positions of pivot and middle back player. DEN played modern handball.

The reason which cut down a good performance of the team, was, that they didn't change the rhythm of the play in the crucial phases of the match. As one of the few teams, they have "quick centre" attack system good developed. The team played full-area handball with very good running phase of the back players. The result of Denmark team matches often depended on performance of one single player (middle back player). There is one team, of those not placing among the first six teams, that cannot be omitted here. In fact, the team of NOR played very nice handball in a high pace. Even this style did not celebrated success during this Championship; the work out concept of the game and selection of the players will bring achievement in much better placement, than the ECh 9th place, in the near future.

*All Star Team W17 EURO 2007*

Goalkeeper	Marta ZDERIC (CRO)
Right wing	Marta LOPEZ HERRERO (ESP)
Right back	Nora MOERK (NOR)
Middle back	Lotte GRIGEL (DEN)
Pivot	Yvette BROCH (NED)
Left back	Gnosiane NIOMBLA (FRA)
Left wing	Martina RINGAYEN (FRA)

Top Scorer: Milena KNEZEVIC (MNE), 65 g.  
Defence pl.: Estefania Descalzo Perez (ESP)  
Most valuable pl.: Tatiana Khmyrova (RUS).

**Team parameters***Age and international matches*

Table 2. Age/International matches

TEAM	AGE	IM
FRA	16,6	13,7
ESP	16,8	7,1
NED	16,8	13,3
RUS	16,9	10,6
SRB	16,3	8,3
DEN	-	-
Top 6 Avg	16,7	10,6

As personal data about players of Danish team were not published, as a starting point we have used data of the first five teams only (table 2). We were dealing only with players actively participating at the Championship. In Russian and Danish team, 17 players were playing during the Championship, the remaining four teams used 16 players. The youngest team was the team of Serbia with two 15-years old players, six 16-years old players and eight 17-years old players. In French team, six 16-years old players played at the ECh, in the remaining teams, 2–4 16-years old players played.

A typical feature of the monitored age category is low number of international matches, which is understandable from the point of view of the long-term sport preparation of the 17-years old players. The highest number of international matches had the team of France (13,7), the lowest number had the team of Spain (7,1). Among individual players, the player with the highest number of international matches was Russian player Tatiana Khmyrova (53), who was, at the same time, announced the most valuable player of the tournament.

#### Height figures

Table 3. Height of the players

Team	No	Avg	-169	170+	180+
FRA	16	173,2	6	6	4
ESP	16	174,6	7	4	5
NED	16	172,9	3	12	1
RUS	17	175,4	4	7	6
SRB	16	173,2	5	9	2
DEN	17	-	-	-	-
Total		173,9	5	8	4

Data in table 3 describe a selection of players in the first five best teams of the ECh according to the body height. Average body height of the teams was 173,9 cm. The teams of France, Spain and Russia had 4-6 players taller than 180 cm in their selection of the players. Team of Netherlands had only one player taller than 180 cm (in the area of pivot), whereas up to 12 players were taller than 170 cm.

#### Time played (TP)

Table 4. Time played

Team	No	Min	24	25	50	75
	X		-%	%+	%+	%+
FRA	16	420	3	5	7	1
ESP	16	420	6	4	4	2
NED	16	420	5	4	3	4
RUS	17	420	6	3	7	1
SRB	16	420	6	3	2	5
DEN	17	420	4	5	7	1
Total		420	5	4	5	2

As resulting form the table 4, all teams were trying to spread out the match stress over the whole team during the tournament ; the most successful teams being France and Denmark with 3-4 players playing for a 24% period of the playing time and only 1 player playing for more than 75% of the playing time. On the contrary, in Serbian team, as many as 5 players went through more than 75% of the playing time. In the team of Netherlands it were 4 players of their selection.

#### Match results

Table 5. Match results – Total average

Team	Result
FRA	30 : 22
ESP	25 : 24
NED	31 : 25
RUS	28 : 25
SRB	26 : 26
DEN	29 : 26
Average	28 : 25

On the basis of the results of the seven matches played by each team we can state that the average score of the "Top six teams of the ECh" was 28:25 (table 5). From the point of view of the goals scored, the best team was the team of Netherlands (31 goals); the most successful team in the defense phase was the team of France (22 goals).

#### Attacking phase of game – trends

##### Attacking activities of the individuals – developments

##### Handling the passes

Universal players with various types of passes, often very swift ones (DEN, NOR), gained the foreground, handling the ball with one hand occurred very often, mainly in the counter attack, passes from the back player to the far away wing and passes in jump to opposite direction also occurred often, very important was also one-handed pass to the area of the wing, players often passed risky balls to the team-mate defended tightly by an opponent.

##### Shot from back player area

Running and preparation phase for shot is shortening, running phase without ball appeared as the most decisive shooting phase, players tried to avoid being blocked by short run-off sideways from a defender or by side flexion in a jump.

##### Shot from wing area

The best teams' wing's starting position was in the corner, it was common standard to handle the inaccurate pass within the running phase, in duels with a goalkeeper an effort in change of shooting style was observed.

##### Shot from pivot area

Movement after a dynamic screen or accurately timed movement into an open area were the most decisive moments for the pivot, one-handed ball handling often occurred, pivots were shooting in jump and while falling into the goal-keeper's area as well.

*Taking a free position within feint movement without and with the ball*

Back player: realized both sides feint motion, very notable was un-clinch to the opposite direction of shooting hand dynamic in-jump on both feet occurred very often, releases were "jumped" and very aggressive, heading direction into the goal area.

Pivot: during release movement, fast footwork was evident, during release movement without ball, usage of various „feint“ motions occurred, after handling the ball, very quick turn followed. Wing: there was often release movement perceptible in direction behind front-up line defenders, an ability to foresee the situation and running out from the defense system into the first phase of the counter attack was apparent, dynamic release motion 1:1 occurred in the second wave of counter attack.

*7 m throws*

Each team out of the "Top 6 teams" had one specialist player with 91% to 79% shooting effectiveness, only in Serbian team two players were alternating during the 7 m throws, other teams involved 4-6 players in this activity.

*Shooting effectiveness from various areas in front of the goalkeeper area*

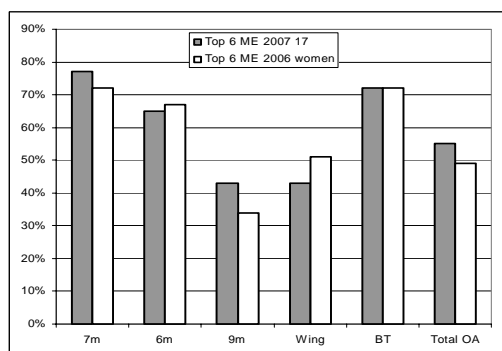


Figure 1 Shooting effectiveness from the various areas in the organised attack

Shooting effectiveness from various areas in front of the goalkeeper area was compared to the effectiveness of the first six best teams of the Women's ECh 2006. The most striking difference not in favour of the 17-years old players was in the shooting effectiveness from the wing area (41% - 51%). Participation of the wings in organised (gradual) attack actually decline, the wings were orientated just to finish the attack. On the contrary, comparatively high shooting effectiveness was observed at the position of back players (43% - 34%). 17-years old players often shot from the standing position; when shooting in a jump, players often used to avoid organised blocks of the opponents.

Each team out of the "Top 6 teams" had at least one excellent back player who was great in shooting from longer distances. Based at high shooting effectiveness from the back player area, also shooting effectiveness in the organised (gradual) attack (OA) was rather high, compare to adult women (55% - 49%). It is obvious, comparing share of the goals shot in the organised attack, that women aged 17 used to shoot with jumping into the goalkeeper area after feint activities (22% - 14%).

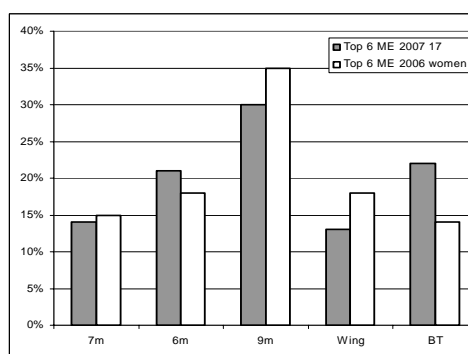


Figure 2 Share of goals shot in organised attack from Various areas in front of the goalkeeper area

To the contrary, very low number of goals comes from area of the wing (13% - 18%) and from longer distance shots (9 m) of the back player area (30% - 35%). Taking a free position by the feint activities in front of the goal-keeper area probably pass through certain kind of revival; but for handball in general, a decrease of numbers of goals from the area of wing is not satisfying. Positioning of shooted goals shot by the "Top 6 teams" into the 9 segments of the goal is also interesting (table 6). Most frequently, the teams successfully shoot the goal into the sectors VII and IX, i.e. into the lower corners of the goal (not less than 41% of all goals scored). As many as 47% of all goals were placed into the segments I, IV and VII of the goal; i.e. on the right side from the goal-keeper's perspective.

Table 6. Positioning of shooted goals in individual segments of the goal

I.	16%	II.	6%	III.	12%
IV.	9%	V.	1%	VI.	8%
VII.	22%	VIII.	8%	IX.	19%

*Attacking systems – development trends*

The "Top 6 of the ECh" used simple combinations with number of ending alternatives, being flexible against various defensive systems.

A cooperation of pair on a small area was the determining factor for the successful attack, teams with different player types have an advantage (against various defensive systems), only Serbia and Russia used smaller number of combinations and used more individual improvisational skills of the players, only Netherlands, Norway and Denmark used the organised system of the "quick centre", the rest of the teams teams used this startling type of the attack sporadically, the first wave counter attack has quite high frequency at the ECh, the second wave counter attack was used by all monitored teams.

*Effectiveness of various types of attack*

Effectiveness of attacks was evaluated on the basis of number of goals scored in a organised attack and in a fast break. The evaluation was influenced by the fact that statistical program did not specify a different between the organised attack and the second wave of counter attack. On the basis of our monitoring we can say most of the teams used mainly the second wave of counter attack in much larger scale than the resulting 20% from a proportion of all goals scored in a game (fig. 3). On the basis of relatively high shooting effectiveness from the back player area (55% - 49%), effectiveness of shooting in organised attack was also markedly higher compare to adult women. Effectiveness from the break was almost at the same level (fig. 4).

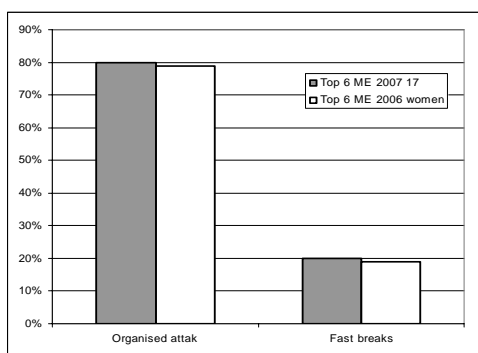


Figure 3 Shooted goal percentage from various types of attacks

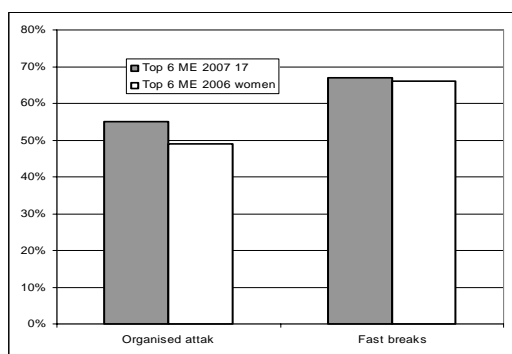


Figure 4 Effectiveness of the various types of attacks

*Organised offensive*

the first six teams of the ECh were using five to six simple combinations; dominating by perfectly organised individual action and cooperation of two players, backs players were in a starting position throughout the width of the playground, speed of the player's within initial movement was very fast, and after crossing their places they tried to occupy the entire area in front of the goal-area, cooperation of the back player and the pivot was crucial in all special combinations; all teams have minimum two back players, who were able to shoot varied and strong long distance shots, a transition from one-pivot system to the system with two pivots was observed by all teams.

*Fast break*

*Trends in fast break realization:*

Players followed their own running tracks, players crosses rarely, basic position of the team in front of goalkeeper are was mainly with one pivot, only the team of Norway had a basic position with two pivots, the first phase of the counter attack was very effective within each team of the "Top 6 ECh" during the counter attack some of the teams changed one player, final shoot of the counter attack was realized mainly by regrouping with one more player in the wings area or by back player shooting from distance through gap in unorganized defense of the opponent.

*Defensive phase of game – trends*

Each of the teams of the "Top 6 ECh" disposed with 2-3 defensive systems, most frequently 6:0 and 5:1, each team had at least one basic and one alternative defensive system with 6 players of both team in a field, behavior of the players in defense was very correct, players belonging to the Top 6 teams of this tournament were technically on a high level quality (the average number of exclusions in the "Top 6" teams was 4, the European Champion France, had 3 exclusions on average), cooperation goalkeeper – blocking was not noticed obviously; number of direct blockings is diminishing (on average 5 blocks per team for a match), there was an effort in each defence system to gain the ball, followed by counter attack (on average 9 gains of the ball per match), the most of the teams did not try to interrupt or stop the game (with foul); they tried to put an opponent to disadvantageous shooting position or to a passive play (the average number of game stops was 21, the average number of the Netherlands team was 31); each team possessed one specialist player – defender, usually it was the middle defender.

Some of the teams had a player situated in the area of left outer defender who was necessary for the fast break system of the team (ESP), when played one player more, the teams mostly realized combination system 5+1; only teams of Spain and Denmark used often defensive system (6:0), when the teams played one player less no special practice in defensive systems was observed.

**Basic defensive system**

Each team of the "ECh Top 6" had its typical defensive system they were using during the most part of the match. The basic system, probably from tactical reasons, was alternated in teams of Spain and Russia.

- France 5:1 outer defender was defending at the 12-14 m position from the their own goal,
- Spain 6:0 massive central block, defenders positioned second from the side line were offensive, clear movement in ball direction,
- Nether. 6:0 offensive central block, defenders positioned second from the side line approached free-throw line level,
- Russia 5:1 extremely active defender, the base position of the players defending at the back line of the defence system was placed at the level of the free throw line,
- Serbia 6:0 massive central blocking, positioned not very much in front, active were defenders positioned second from the side line,
- Denmark 6:0 offensive central blocking.

**Alternative defensive system**

Each team of the "ECh Top 6" used one to two alternative defensive systems, mostly based on different tactical principles according to the defensive area depth (6:0 or more active defense system).

- France 5+1, 6:0 outer defender – tight personal defense,
- Spain 3:2:1 defence with transition to 3-3 system, very demanding defence for this age category; the team won decisive match (semifinals against Russia) because of this defensive system; defending large defense area within active movement in the direction of the ball were typical for this system,
- Nether. 5:1, 5+1 outer defender at the 9-11 m position
- Russia 6:0 two variants: defensive one, up to 8 m level and another one, with access beyond the free throw line level,
- Serbia 5+1 tight personal d. of outer def.,

Denmark 5-1 two variants: offensive player at the 11-12 m level with transition to 6:0 system and outer defender almost 190 cm tall.

**Defense system with one player more**

Two teams of the "ECh Top 6" performed basic defensive system with higher mobility of the players; remaining teams were using combined defensive system 5+1.

- France 5+1, 4:2 all players took an active part in defence with access beyond the free throw line level,
- Spain 6:0, 4:2 mostly, the team was using more active version of the basic defensive system,
- Nether. 5+1 tight personal defence of outer defender,
- Russia 5+1 outer defender was defending at the 14-15 m level, basic position of the back line of defence area was placed at the free-throw line level,
- Serbia 5+1 tight personal defence of outer defender,
- Denmark 6:0 very active movement in direction of the ball.

**Defense system with one player less**

In this kind of defence no special practice in defensive systems was observed. All teams were using defensive system 5:0 with more or less active approaching to the player with ball. In the last minutes of the match FRA-DEN, team of DEN used 4:1 system 4:1.

**The goalkeeper's play - trends**

The first three teams of the ECh engaged two goalkeepers; Russia, Serbia and Denmark used three goal-keepers actively. Each team had the so-called "first" goalkeeper who was given more opportunities in the matches by the coaches. Difference in catching effectiveness between the first and the second goal-keeper was apparent in the first two teams (France, Spain). Effectiveness of the goalkeepers in the last teams of the "ECh Top 6" who were not going play so often was considerably better.

**Overall (%) effectiveness of the goalkeeper in team**

Team	Goalkeeper		Team effectiv.
	First	Second	
France	40	33	37%
Spain	38	22	34%
Netherlands	33	34	34%
Russia (3)	32	31	30%
Serbia (3)	32	39	33%
Denmark (3)	33	46	37%
Total	35	34	34%

First and second goalkeeper for each team: FRA (Bonche, Leythienne), SPA (G.Perez, T.Perez), NED (Wissink, Terlouw), RUS (Konova, Kretova), SRB (Colic, Georgijev), DEN (Krasniqi, Soby).

### **Effectiveness of the goalkeeper from the various areas**

The most apparent difference in the effectiveness of the goalkeepers of the "ECh Top 6" and other teams was in catching effectiveness from the area of back player (51%). Catching effectiveness from other areas was approximately at the same level. The best effectiveness was achieved by the goalkeepers of Croatia (40%) followed by the teams of France, Denmark and Slovakia (37%).

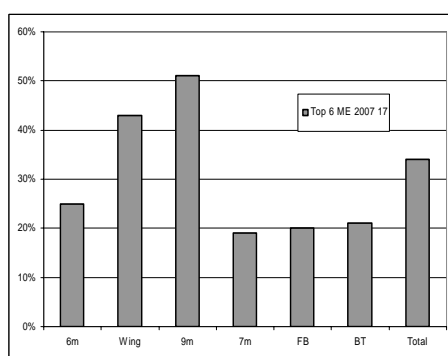


Figure 5. Goalkeepers' effectiveness from the various areas in front of the goalkeeper area.

### **General trends**

#### **Attack**

The "Top 6 of the ECh" used simple combinations with number of final alternatives, being flexible against various defensive

systems, a cooperation of pair on a small area was determining factor for successful attack, teams with different types of player have an advantage (against various defensive systems), only Serbia and Russia used smaller number of combinations and used more individual improvisational skills of the players.

Only Netherlands, Norway and Denmark used organised system of the "quick centre", the rest of the teams used this startling type of the attack sporadically, the first wave counter attack has quite high frequency at the ECh, the second wave counter attack was used by all monitored teams

#### **Defence**

Each team of the "Top 6 ECh" disposed with 2-3 defensive systems, most frequently 6:0 and 5:1, behavior of the players in defence was very correct, players belonging to the Top 6 teams of this tournament were technically on a high level quality (the average number of exclusions in the "Top 6" teams was 4, the European Champion France, had 3 exclusions on average), there was an effort in each defence system to gain the ball, followed by counter attack (on average 9 gains of the ball per match).

Each team possessed one specialist player – defender, usually it was the middle defender, when played one player more, the teams mostly realized combination system 5+1; only teams of Spain and Denmark used often defensive system (6:0), The most apparent difference in effectiveness of the goalkeepers of the "ECh Top 6" and the rest of the teams was in catching effectiveness from the area of back player (51%).

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## EUROPSKO RUKOMETNO PRVENSTVO U17 ZA ŽENE - SLOVAČKA KVALITATIVNA TREND ANALIZA

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### **Sažetak**

Ovaj članak se bavi kvalitativnom trend analizom ženskog U17 Europskog rukometnog prvenstva u Slovačkoj. U ekipnoj kvalitativnoj analizi koncentrirali smo se na izvedbe 6 momčadi (FRA, ESP, NED, RUS, SRB, DEN). S naše točke gledišta, unutar mogućnosti izbora timskih igrača, implementacija obrambenog i napadačkog sustava igre ovih momčadi bila je najprogresivnija u ovoj uzrasnoj kategoriji. Svaka momčad od ovih "Top 6 teams" ima najmanje jednog izvanrednog vanjskog igrača koji je izvrstan u šutiranju s većih udaljenosti. Utemeljeno na šuterskoj efikasnosti iz stražnjeg polja, također je i učinkovitost iz graduiranih napada bila rjeđa (55%). Samo Srbija i Rusija koriste manji broj kombinacija uz dosta individualnih improvizacijskih sposobnosti igračica. Nizozemska, Norveška i Danska koriste sustav "brzog centra", ostale momčadi koriste iznenađenja u napadu sporadično. Svaka momčad od "Top 6 teams" raspolaže sa 2-3 obrambena sustava, najčešće 6:0 i 5:1. Ponašanje igračica u obrani je bilo vrlo korektno, igračice u "Top 6 teams" na ovom natjecanju bile su tehnički na visokoj razini kvalitete (prosječan broj isključenja u "Top 6 teams" bio je 4). Svaka momčad posjeduje jednog specijalistu – braniča, obično korištenog kao srednji branič. Najočitija razlika koja se pojavljuje kod učinkovitosti vratara "Top 6 teams" i ostalih momčadi je bilo hvatanje lopti kod šuta s vanjskih pozicija (51%).

**Ključne riječi:** rukomet, faza napada, faza obrane, vratarke

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