



Please note that the author's opinion on various aspects of the subject does not comply with the opinion of the EHF Methods Commission.

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Handball at school

Behind this headline lies the future of the entire field itself.

Handball is part of the ball games and it competes in Europe against football, basketball and volleyball trying to win the children's sympathy. Outside Europe it competes against even more ball game fields.

All ball games are audience attractors throughout the year – their popularity is vast and hence the difficult contest between the fields. As such, the battle to attract children to the ball game fields usually begins at a young age, at most places as early as the age of 6 when they enter school.

Throughout Europe, 6 year-olds are already in school. This means the children of the continent go through school on their way to adulthood and becoming part of society in the future. They absorb their universal knowledge, their specific education, beliefs etc from school. Furthermore, their attraction to a specific sports field they will be part of in the future, compete with in the future, be fans of in the future – either active or as observers – usually forms at school and accompanies them into their futures.

From this we may conclude that if the handball field became the major field in schools over the continent, its part opposed to the other ball game fields would grow as well as the employed people in the field and its fans. Therefore, there is high importance for handball activities within the school. Handball players, fans and activists will form from schools that handball is their leading field with games and activities. In schools where handball doesn't exist, it is rare for handball players to emerge and if it does happen, it is only thanks to parents who are handball people and independently bring their children to handball clubs, or after watching handball games on television and deciding to join a club.

In most cases, children that have the potential to be talented handball players, that the game isn't played at their school, will take part in other ball game fields (basketball, volleyball etc) either merely because they are not aware of handball or that their teacher will convince them to take part in a field that already exists in their school, and he or she are usually the leader of that field.

It's clear to us all that the case is different in different countries. In the northern European countries – and some of the midland countries – handball is in the 2nd place in the ball game fields, and in some countries even in the 1st place, meaning, after football - which is impossible to compete with its popularity - handball is preferable to basketball and volleyball.



Having said that, in the Mediterranean countries (the southern countries - Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Israel and The former Yugoslavian countries) - basketball is the second most important field. The amounts of money that flow in favor of the basketball players salaries is sometimes even greater than football players, even though football is the number one field in these countries. The handball field usually struggles for its popularity and existence – and this we must change fundamentally through schools and up.

Unfortunately - quote unquote - the handball field is not a “street” field. Football is played by children anywhere possible. They can easily create a goal with 2 rocks and play 2 against 2, 3 against 3 and so forth. In order to play basketball, they can hang a ring or can on the wall and play 1 against 1 etc. In order to play volleyball all they need to do is hang a cord between two walls in the street. However, to play handball, they need a net goal, the 6 mark and more.

The main difficulty is that in the case of football, basketball and volleyball, children will play with whatever ball is available at the time. Handball acquires a certain size ball and anything bigger doesn't do. Therefore the problem is that the children on the street will not have the right size ball to play handball.

This is why it should be so important to us that handball penetrates to the hearts of the children deliberately through school, where there are courts or open fields with handball goals and balls. It is important that even at the younger ages children start playing mini handball and start loving throwing the ball to the goal more than kicking the ball with their feet (which is easier).

In order for handball to infiltrate to schools we initially need the teacher's cooperation, as well as the local handball union and local sports office - each country and their possibilities and needs. Finally, the EHF's help is needed as well. I will try to specify each factor in the next paragraphs.



Teachers

This is the foundation. We have held many meetings in the past under the headline "Handball at School" where we discussed how to motivate teachers and parents towards handball. Much was said and written; we looked at different modals from different countries that have strong handball fields, each country and their ability, their own special way, cooperation with the local sports office etc.

The general common motto was a combination of 3:

- I. The foundation of a thriving handball field is school.
- II. In each school where the physical education teacher was a handball person – there was handball!
- III. The parent's cooperation and their drive was a key to success.

The question is how to make this happen? Here are some suggestions:

- A. The local union and the existing unions should visit the schools and identify teachers that are willing to get into the project and deal with it. It won't be easy. It won't be convenient. Teachers who are fascinated by other fields will reject us immediately. Others just won't be willing to change the status quo. Nevertheless, occasionally we will be able to find a teacher who will be willing to give handball a chance in their school. The local union's job is to make that idea turn into reality, even giving help from a local existing club to which all children can go to, should the handball field root in their school.

Incentives for willing teachers:

1. Financial incentives (unfortunately this is the no.1 incentive in the world!)
2. Extra work for the teacher as a coach in the union to which the children will go to after school where he will train them. In places where there is no existing union, everything possible should be done by the local union and municipality in order to create a new local handball club in the school.
3. Send the teacher/coach to the local union trainers' course or the EHF and not on his expense. In addition, we can send the teacher/coach to watch the European championship and again, not on his expense, to positively seize him. We need to invest in them in order to bare fruit.
4. Contact the schools and PE teacher training seminars and identify students who are willing to assist the handball field. They must sign a contract that once they finish their studies and be qualified teachers, handball will be the number 1 field in their schools.



This can be done by

- a) A financial incentive to help the student with his tuition and accommodation payments.
- b) An agreement between the local union and local education office that has the authority to place the seminar graduates in jobs in years to come, where they can promise priority in job placements to teachers whose area of expertise is handball and are signed by the local union. The promise of an immediate work place after graduation will be a source of motivation for the young teachers.

Training and summer camps

From the ages of 10+ we witness different structures of teenagers' organizations in various issues and hobbies. Common activities take place in the form of summer camp or training camp such as handball. Therefore, we must turn the summer camps, training camps and various tourneys – including those that take place in the same form like during Easter (Feinstein) or Harvest (Osetren) – to an attraction point for children and teenagers.

By promising an appealing camp in the summer or during the Easter and Harvest holidays, including a night or two away from home to play against other children their age, we can sometimes “seize” these children within the club for the whole year. All their desires are directed towards the nearest tourney or summer camp.

Should these tourneys and summer camps take place far away or in another country and involve competitions and joint practices with other unions where coaches rotate and children blend, this contributes to the fusion, unique acquaintances, solidarity and fair-play amongst players from different places, countries, cultures etc. The success of these events is measured by the desire of the children at the end of the current camp to join the next promised camp in the year to follow.

These camps can be organized by sports unions, the handball union, PE teachers etc. The important thing is that they take place and even more important that by school teachers where handball is the leading field.

In Israel we hold a tourney every Easter holiday similar to the summer camp we hold in Eilat, known as Israel's Riviera. The schools are the basis and the competitions are between them while the sport unions, that the children join, support.



Hundreds of children go to Eilat, some of which part of the handball group, t first, in order to go to the tourney. Down the road they are swapped by the field and stay with it in the future. This is also a way to bring children closer to handball.

In the summer, when children go on their summer break, they should be encouraged – especially in schools where the teacher is a handball person – to take place in tourneys or summer camps either as a daily training camp which is fun and includes swimming pools, beaches, trips etc or as a few days and nights in camp.

Parents

In the age of the internet and television, parents are interested in their children detaching from the screens and go out to play outside the house and school standards. However, they still want them to be in some kind of organization and not wander the streets. Our place is in this niche. In schools where handball is the leading field, we should arrange the parents to motivational and belonging meetings and ask their help in encouraging their children and homes to be part of the handball field and the club they will go to during their free time. The parents encouragement is essential to them themselves – to get their children out of the negative influences found on the streets and the small screens – and to us as more activist and handball people from all ages.

Help in School

In my handball union, we started a tradition that costs us as much as money but is worth any amount - we provide pupils with school work help. The teachers are high school students that are teenage players which pay a symbolic membership to the club and the rest of their toll is voluntary, to teach the children that belong to the club and have difficulties in subjects like foreign languages, math etc.

With the help of these children and their voluntary parents we progress the children not only on handball. You wouldn't believe how much this halps bring new children to our club and how many parents become our fans.

The help takes place once or twice a week for children that have difficulties in a certain subject after school hours, in our clubs, which also strengthens the connection between the club and the school and it's teachers.



Getting into Schools

At the beginning of the school year we need to get in touch with the schools and ask them to allow us to come as visitors to the schools and give example classes to each and every student in all classes. If the teacher is a fan of a different ball game, they will probably be reluctant to cooperate. Their school will deal with the field that is close to their hearts and they are interested in.

On the other hand, if the teacher is a handball person, the work will be done by him – bringing the children closer to handball and to the club which he seeks. Hence, there are teachers that aren't captivated by a certain field. These teachers will cooperate and allow our representatives to come and give example classes. It is of utmost importance to reach these teachers before the other fields do at the beginning of the school year.

The most popular players in the field should be sent to them along with the best coach for the teenagers team. Obviously, all these steps require a person from within the union that will arrange everything with the school as without such a person, nothing will happen.

The children that will join the union from these schools will be grouped based on their age and even class if possible so that they will be able to compete even within the union. Once they join the union, they will get an annual membership card to the adult team's games accompanied by a parent or chaperone. This person will turn in time to a fan / observer and as such it will be possible to get some of the parents to take part in certain activities within the union.

Television and the assistance of the EHF

In most European countries, football games are broadcasted non stop, live or re runs, basketball a bit less but still relatively frequently. However, handball doesn't enjoy many broadcasts on the local stations, if at all (excluding a few countries).

The EHF can do wonders in this department by handing recorded games to the local unions for them to broadcast in their countries. Final European Cup games and Final European Championship games should be pushed by the EHF to all of those countries who have no intention to broadcast these games not due to lack of budget but rather due to lack of popularity of the field in these countries.

Children who see the field on the television (as well as adults) every once in a while will be more aware of the field and together with the right efforts, the chances of them being swept by the handball field will grow.



In conclusion

Everything I have described here is based on personal experience of 33 years. We started our club with 1 team and 1 school. Until today we have won 14 state championships and 12 cups. It is hard work, exhausting, with disappointments as well as successes and many difficulties. However' with strong will and stubbornness it is possible to conquer any goal. Patience pays off. Mao Tze - Tong said that a thousand mile journey begins with a single small step If one lacks the patience and strong will, they will no succeed.

In my union there are 21 active teams which are part of the handball union leagues, and are listed on the internet. There are children from the age of 12 and till the adult team, altogether 400 listed players in the union!

In addition, there are 350 children in the handball school which is branched to the club. They come from 9 different schools where handball is the main field. You won't believe this but we aren't expanding our activity to other schools solely due to lack of coaches!

Itzhak teomim-frenkel

