

# THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOALKEEPER AND THE DEFENCE



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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In my last article (EHF Periodical 01/2003) I wrote about the individualization of goalkeeper training, so this time I am going to discuss the teamwork between the goalkeeper and the defence - how the court players and the goalkeepers can cooperate to achieve the best results for the team.

I will try to do this without going into the details of what kind of defence is used and I also want to try to focus on the work done by the individual court player from the perspective of the goalkeeper position.

created by short distance shots and it is also where the collaboration between the defender and the goalkeeper on long distance shots is placed.

The strategy brick has more to do with team tactics, how to deploy a strategic defence.

There is also a third brick that counts here: the experience brick. In a lot of cases it is just the experience gained in similar situations in the past that gives the goalkeeper the right intuition and the ability to pull off a save.

## THE GOALKEEPER WALL

EXPERIENCE		
STRATEGY		
UNDERSTANDING	MENTAL STRENGTH	
TECHNIQUE	PHYSICAL	TACTICS
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF HANDBALL...		
ATHLETES' BEHAVIOUR...		
THE TALENT = PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CAPABILITIES		

As I introduced you to my "goalkeeper wall" in the previous article, I will confine myself this time to only mentioning the bricks that form the elements of this article.

It is especially two bricks that are key to the teamwork between the goalkeeper and the court players: the tactical brick and the strategy brick.

The tactical brick is where I put the individual tactics that the goalkeeper uses in man-to-man situations

## THE TACTICAL PART OF THE GOALKEEPING

As I mentioned above, I am going to divide the tactical part into two kinds of tactics, the individual and the collective. In this article, I will not go into any details on the individual part, the objective of which is to win man-to-man situations when the goalkeeper CANNOT count on any direct help from the defenders at the moment of shooting. What I want to write about is the moments preceding a shot.

I am also going to write about the collective part, when the goalkeeper CAN expect some kind of help from the defenders and he/she has to read the situation and try to take advantage of the help that the defenders can provide.

My number one rule for all kinds of cooperation between the goalkeeper and the court players is that the goalkeeper has to adjust his/her action to the situation that has been created by the court players, even if it deviates from the tactical strategy agreed by the coach and the team. We must never forget that the goalkeeper is the last person who is able to stop the ball before it enters the goal. Therefore, he/she can never put the blame for a goal conceded on the

defender, because there simply is no system that is good enough to stop good shooters. The system is there to help and not to be used as an excuse in the case of failure.

It is in these situations that we can distinguish a very good goalkeeper from an ordinary one. A very good goalkeeper knows how to read the situation and to see how the defender or the defence is helping him/her in a particular situation while a goalkeeper with less experience or less tactical knowledge just executes his/her drilled "moves" and then waits to see if the ball "hits" him/her.

Maybe the most important thing when we talk about good tactical goalkeeping is knowing how to find the right position in the goal before going into action and making the save.

If the goalkeeper has a good tactical eye, knowledge, and the ability to read the attackers' AND THE DEFENDERS' movements, he/she has a much better chance of being at the right position at the right moment and of finally making a save. This is also why it is so important for each defending court player to always try and put stress on the shooter as he is taking the shot, thereby giving the goalkeeper an advantage.

Being in the right place a little before the moment of action often gives a great advantage to the goalkeeper and could make the difference between a save or a goal.

## LONG-DISTANCE SHOTS

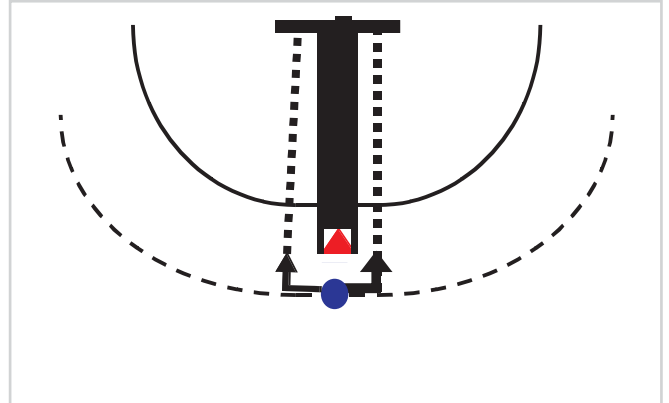
Almost every handball team uses some kind of collective blocking system to help the goalkeeper with shots from a distance. In some cases, the defence have the responsibility of blocking shots coming in close to the second or, sometimes, the first post; in other cases they have to block the side of the shooter's arm. This means that if the shooter is right-armed, the defence will take care of the right side of the goal and vice versa if the shooter is left handed (seen through the attacker's eyes).

**IN ALL CASES, THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK FOR THE DEFENDER IN COOPERATING WITH THE GOALKEEPER IS TO PREVENT THE SHOOTER FROM TURNING TO THE "WRONG" SIDE OF THE GOAL.**

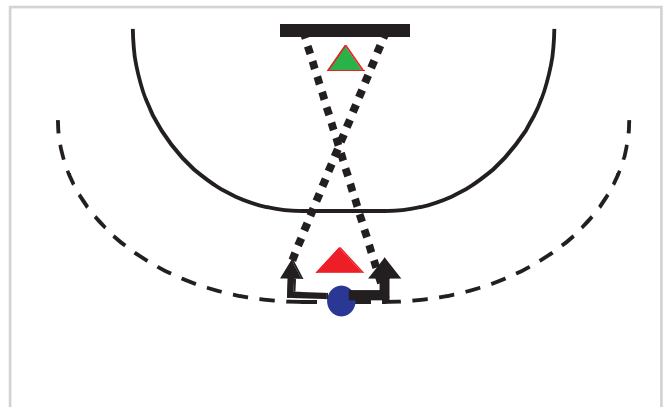
The tactical eye of a good goalkeeper quickly reads which defender is cooperating with him/her (this is not

always clear!!!) and positions himself/herself to save the shot that he/she expects to come straight to his/hers "part" of the goal.

**Figure 1. The "right" way of block defending.**



**Figure 2. The "wrong" way of block defending.**



As we can see in the two figures above, the distance between the defender and the attacker is important when we want to block-defend. The closer the defenders are to the attacker, the more possibilities the attacker has to turn the shot around, but at the same moment we want to keep the shooter as far away from the goal as possible.

This is often the big problem with defence systems that use block defending as their principal way of collaborating between the defence and the goalkeeper.

The important thing in these systems (6-0 or 5-1) is that the defender finds the right distance from the shooter, sufficiently far away from the goal to give more time to the goalkeeper but not too close to the shooter to prevent the shooter from turning the shot around. And all this without taking the pivot player into account!!!



*Good one man block, taking care of the shooting arm side of the goal*



*Touching the shooter and helping the goalkeeper with a block. The best way to help the goalkeeper !!!!*

Normally I would say that the best way to cooperate with the goalkeeper is to try and touch the shooter. A shooter who is "busy" with a defender has less time to prepare himself for the shot and most of the shots will lose some of their precision. This is the strategy used in offensive defences as in the 3-2-1, 4-2 or 3-3 systems, but it is also an important ingredient in the more passive defence systems such as 6-0 or 5-1. Even if a team is playing a low 6-0 it is important for one defender to reach and touch the shooter and for at least another one to cooperate with the goalkeeper.

The technique of shooting from a distance has developed substantially in recent years. Today, the shooters are even more creative, quicker and stronger

and frequently have better skills and techniques allowing them to use the defenders for fooling the goalkeeper (shooting at the "wrong" side of the goal). This evolution in the players' skills makes block defending without distracting the shooter almost a mission impossible for the goalkeepers.

## SHORT-DISTANCE SHOTS

The common rules for the defender in all cases when the goalkeeper has to take shots from a short distance without any defender intervening between the shooter and the goalkeeper are:

1. attempt to force the shooter to go out of angle, always trying to occupy the centre space of the court, and force the attacker to take the shot from a less favourable angle;
2. attempt to shorten the time the shooter has to prepare himself for the man-to-man situation against the goalkeeper.

There are two ways of giving an advantage to the goalkeeper in the man-to-man situation that a short distance shot will create and these can be summarized by two words: **SPACE AND TIME**

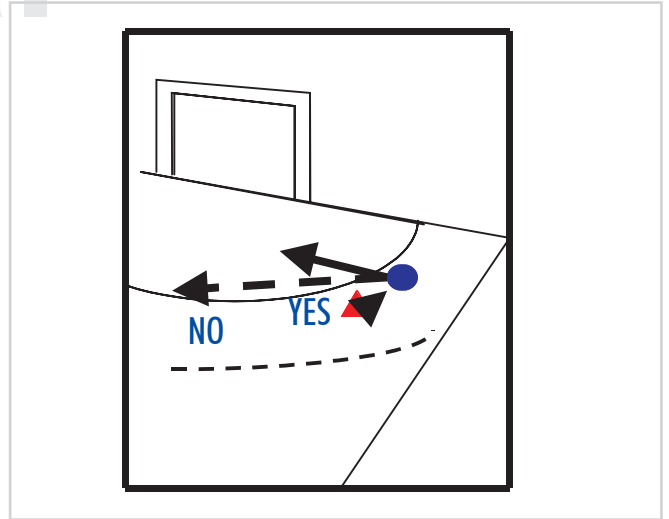
## SHOTS FROM THE WINGS

The first natural job of the wing defender is to prevent his opponent from getting a chance to shoot but if his opponent - the wing attacker - gains the position and attacks the goal, his contribution to help the goalkeeper will be:

1. limiting the angle, trying to keep the attacker from jumping towards the 7-meter line without forcing the attacker to jump forward towards the goalkeeper without gaining extra angle.
2. disturbing the attacker, without provoking a 7-meter throw of course, so that the attacker gets as little time as possible to look at the goalkeeper and the goalkeeper's position.

By following these two simple rules in the defending position - which is not always easy - the wing defender can help the goalkeeper a lot because this will, firstly, leave less space for the goalkeeper to cover (a smaller angle for the attacker) and, secondly, less time for the attacker (more time for the goalkeeper) to prepare himself for the man-to-man showdown with the goalkeeper.

It is at this moment that the goalkeeper changes from collaboration tactics to individual tactics in the man-to-man situation against the wing attacker. It is also important that the goalkeeper is aware of any final touching of the attacker by the defender that may change the direction of the attacker's jump.



## SHOTS FROM THE PIVOT POSITION

In this position it is important that defenders try to cooperate with the goalkeeper by simply trying to limit the space open to the pivot by forcing him to move out of the centre position of the court, as mentioned before. However, the defender may also cooperate - as he does in the case of long distance shots - by trying to defend on the pivot's "strong" side. This is the right side of a right-handed and the left side of a left-handed player. The defender may force the pivot player to take a shot after turning around to his "weak" side.

Another important component in the cooperation with the goalkeeper is to try to prevent the pivot from rising and shooting from a standing-up position. The goalkeeper has a much better chance of diminishing the pivot's angle if he/she shoots from a low position.



*A hard defence against the pivot player that gives a time advantage to the goalkeeper*

## PENETRATION SHOTS

When the attackers penetrate between two defenders they have to cooperate in the same way as described before: trying to give space and time advantage to the goalkeeper.

How? Firstly, by forcing the shooter to move out of angle, by not letting him/her jump towards the centre of the court, and also by trying to distract the shooter by touching him/her (inside the rules) so that the shooter cannot concentrate on the goalkeeper's movements as he prepares for the save.



*Two examples where the defence is helping the goalkeeper quite effectively.*

## SUMMARY

Even a very good goalkeeper needs assistance from his team colleges to play well. The better the work between the court players and the goalkeeper is coordinated, the better are the chances for a save.

It is very important for the court players to be aware of how they can help the goalkeeper not only by sticking to the team strategy but also by knowing how to defend in each individual situation.

The keywords in the cooperation between the goalkeeper and the defence are SPACE AND TIME. If the defence can give the goalkeeper an advantage against the attackers in one or both of these terms, they have done a good defending job.

Since even an excellent defence can never stop the attacking team from sometimes getting into shooting position, this cooperation between the goalkeeper and the defence is an important part of the game.