

# THE USE OF ANTICIPATION IN DEFENCE AS A TOOL TO ORGANISE COUNTER ATTACKS



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## DEFINING ANTICIPATION

Anticipation is a process of mental analysis of the situation in a game, which precedes an action.

Children, juniors and adults, in any given situation, use their eyesight, hearing and touch, to follow the movement of the ball during play.

From these observations, and depending on their level of experience, they make individual tactical decisions, that also fit with the team's collective actions.

Through regular practice, and by memorising situations, the level of expertise is gradually improved. The process, from learning to decision making, will thus be better mastered, adapted and speeded up.

Anticipation, in this context, is defined as the will to act first. It is trying to reach a decision without having first considered each and every factor. It is taking a decision based as much on prediction as a actual observation.

Anticipation is in fact speculating about the future, using clues to allow you to conclude what is the most likely outcome.

Therefore, a beginner will not be able to anticipate, except by chance.

The ultimate aim is to limit the uncertainty as much as possible. It is not possible to predict the action freely, without points of reference.

The ability to anticipate, both from the knowledge and experience point of view, will therefore develop at the same pace as the understanding of the game.

Anticipation, in this case, becomes out-thinking your opponents: Trying to surprise them by offering them an option, before they have had time to fully consider their next action.

To be able to anticipate without taking unnecessary risks, you must be capable of using the available information to choose which options are truly important, compared to those that would be deemed secondary in a mathematical sense.

Anticipation owes nothing to luck, it must be the conclusion of a mental process that relies on observation, memory and the selection of information to reach a calculated decision that is seen as likely, but surprising by its timing.

## ANTICIPATING IN DEFENCE

Defence is, first and foremost, the protection of your goal. Its key aim is therefore to cause as many problems as possible to your opponents, when they have the ball.

The classic order of tactical intentions is as follows:

1. Place as many team mates as possible between the ball, and the goal you are defending.
2. Harass the player on the ball to limit his or her actions, and control his or her nearest teammates.
3. Cause uncertainty in the mind of the attacking team, in order to recover the ball in the best circumstances.

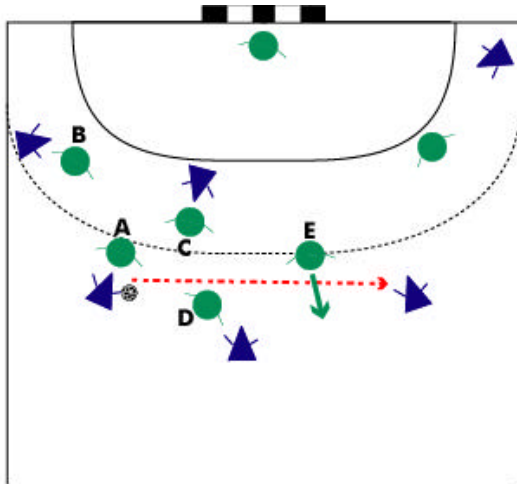
It must be understood that defence is initially a reaction to the movement of the attack.

# periodical

As long as the attacking team has the initiative, there can be no anticipation. Therefore the defence must, in the first instance, through team behaviours and individual initiatives, put the attack under pressure. From then on, it becomes possible to foresee the actions that the attacking team is likely to take. Anticipation becomes possible.

I propose here a classic option using interception to recover the ball (**see diagram 1**):

**Diagram 1**



- **A neutralises and pressures the player on the ball**
- **B, C, D prevent passes to the nearest teammates**
- **E intercepts by anticipating the inevitable pass between the two back**

- The defence is in place and following the general principals outlined above.
- The player on the ball is put under pressure, neutralised.
- The pass to the nearest teammates is blocked through the tactical positioning of the other defenders.
- The interception becomes possible because the actions taken by the defenders make the likely trajectory of the ball inevitable and therefore predictable.

Therefore anticipation in defence consists of:

1. Using good teamwork to limit the attack's choices
2. Actively, not reactively, working to recover

the ball or take the initiative from your opponent - outpacing their return in defence.

## COUNTER ATTACK AND ANTICIPATION

The aim of the counter attack is to outpace the defensive fall back of the team that has just lost the ball, and become a threat to them as quickly as possible.

The counter attack has a number of prerequisites. You must:

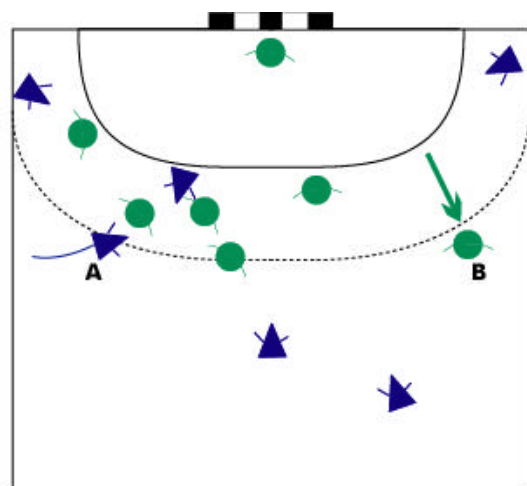
1. Have recovered the ball.
2. Be moving towards your opponent's goal.
3. Get organised faster than the team returning in defence.

In short, you must become the attackers, before your opponents have become the defenders.

Counterattacks and anticipation often go together in people's minds.

Since the beginnings of 7-a-side handball we have seen defenders who anticipate the beginning of a counterattack as soon as an attacker gets ready to shoot (**diagram 2**).

**Diagram 2**



- **Attacker A drives in for a jump shot**
- **The defence organises itself**
- **Defender B anticipates the shot and goes on a counter-attack**

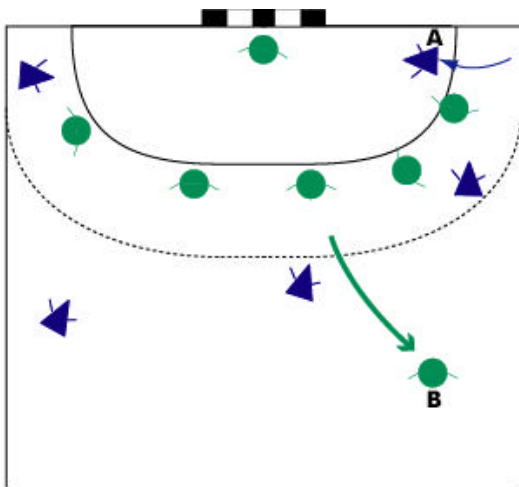
This technique is often used by the defender on the opposite side to where the shot is being taken from. If the ball is well controlled or blocked by the goalkeeper, the player who anticipates will have an advantage over the team falling back in defence.

This tactical solution has always been extensively used. In the 1960's Mares (CSSR) was one of its best exponents.

In women's handball, the wing-defenders, are often already gone at the moment an opponent takes a shot at goal. This choice of action, must always be accompanied by good cover from the second defender, in case the ball is recovered quickly by the opponents and returned to that sector. In fact this tactic can sometimes backfire.

When wing shots are taken, we sometimes see anticipatory runs towards the opponent's goal from the forward central defender on the side of the court the shot is being taken from, because the winger taking the shot will have difficulty getting back to cover in defence (**diagram 3**)

**Diagram 3**



- **Attacker A drives in for a wing shot after outflanking the defence**
- **Defender B anticipates the shot and goes on a counter attack on the side the shot is taken from**

These well used interventions are not exactly described as evolved tactical reflexes, as much as the application of standard practices.

## POSSIBLE ACTIONS:

It seems more interesting to consider the use of anticipation to initiate counter attacks in a more flexible way.

The aim could be to identify situations that make recovery of the ball likely, and to instil, from the outset, a positive mindset that expects a counter attack.



## After the referees have signalled for passive play

When the referees indicate, by bringing their hands to their wrists, that they are about to penalise the attacking team for passive play, this should be a clue to prepare for a counter attack.

In this situation, the attacking team has very little time to try and shoot at goal, and therefore the defence must:

- ✓ Do all it can to pressure the players likely to take the shot.
- ✓ Position itself to block any likely passes
- ✓ Start thinking about the possibility of a counter attack. This last tactical intention should not be done at the expense of the previous two.

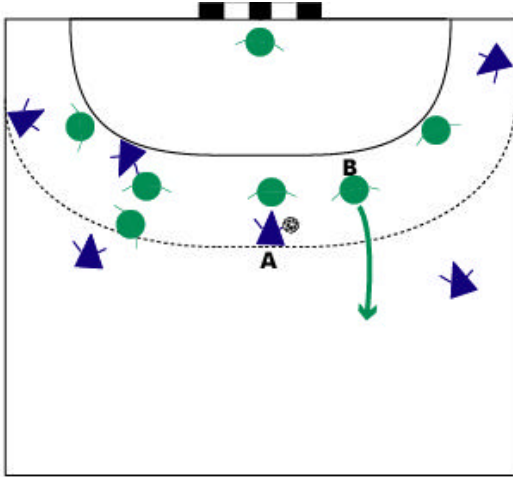
You must therefore position a defender as a deterrent, on the opposite side of the court to where the ball is, whose role will be to:

- ✓ Prevent a pass
- ✓ Move towards the opponent's goal

It would be dangerous to give this task to a player on the end of the defensive line, which would leave a big gap in the defence. It must therefore be given to a defender in an intermediate position. This must be carefully co-ordinated with the rest of the team, to make sure that the attackers cannot exploit the situation (**diagram 4**).

# periodical

**Diagram 4**



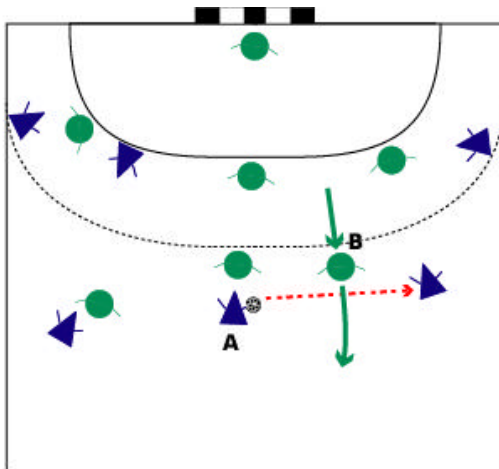
- Referee signals passive play
- Attacker A, who has the ball, cannot pass to teammates closely
- Defender B anticipates the start of the counter attack

## Playing against a team serving a two-minute suspension

In this case, it is important to be imaginative, while still protecting your own goal. We know that there will be a lot of movement in the attack and that their actions will be more spontaneous. The task is therefore to propose options that will:

- ✓ Cause problems to the attack
- ✓ Push one or two defenders towards the opponent's goal

**Diagram 5**



- **Attacker A has the ball**
- **The team playing with one less player cannot pass to teammates closely**
- **Defender B intercepts the pass between the centre and back player.**

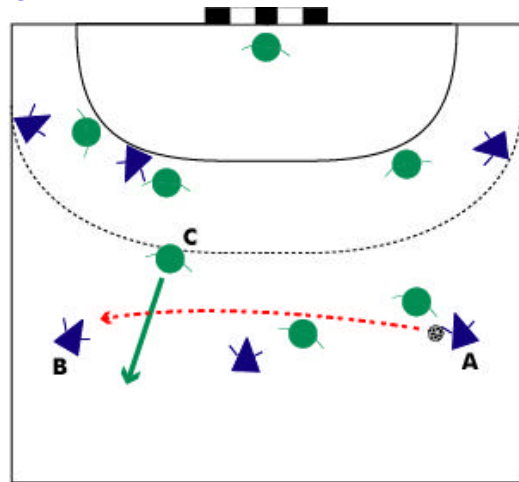
The suggested solution involves 2 forward

defenders, with the remaining 4 players providing a second defensive line. It is assumed that the attacking team has opted to play the two-minute suspension period without a line player.

The first forward defender man-to-man marks either the left or right back player. The second forward defender moves up to pressure the centre player (A) when he has the ball. The only possible option is to pass to the free back player, which allows the defender on the 6-metre line (B) to anticipate and intercept the pass.

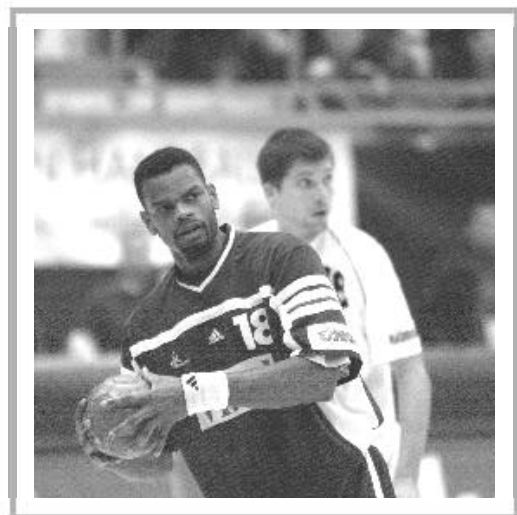
## Using deep defence

**Diagram 6**



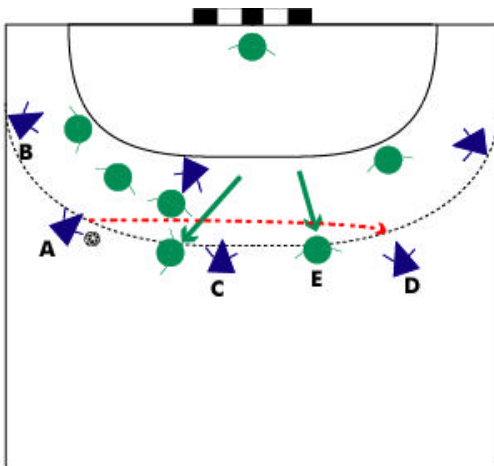
- **Attacker A can only pass to B**
- **Defender C anticipates the pass and intercepts the ball**

When the ball is in play on the opposite side of the court to the attacking line player, position your central defender, as a deterrent, between the centre and back player (A). The defender in position 2 on the line player's side (C) can hope to intercept the pass between the back players.

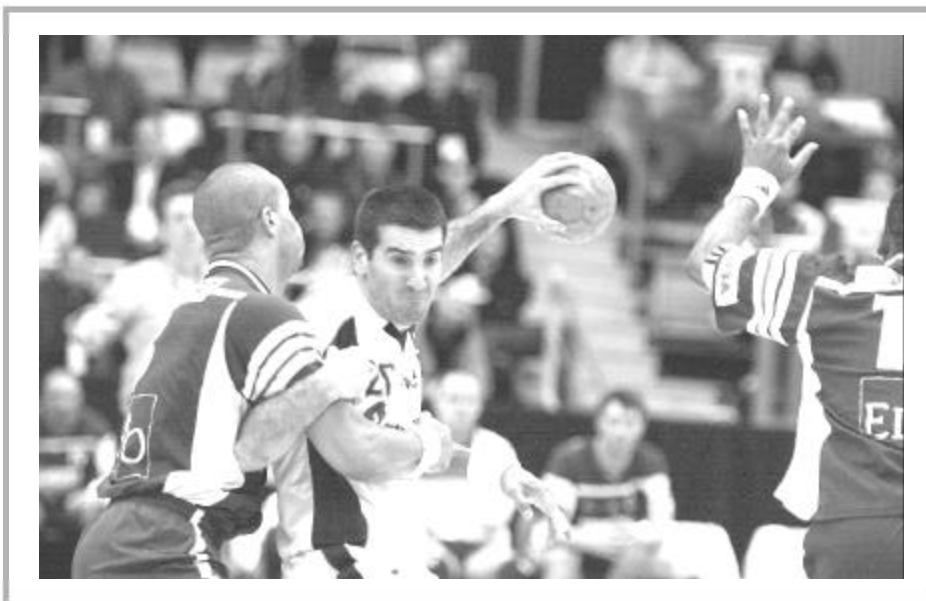


## Using a flat defence

**Diagram 7**



- **Attacker A cannot pass to either B or C**
- **Attacker A makes a long pass to D, which is intercepted by the number 2 defender**



Another option can be used when the ball is travelling in the opposite direction to the position of the line player. When it reaches the centre player, the number 1 defender on the opposite side comes forward and positions himself, as a deterrent, in between the centre and the other back player. At the same time, defender number 2 moves towards the wing to intercept the pass between the centre and the winger.

## CONCLUSION

Anticipation is the mark of a player that has managed to simplify his or her approach to the game. Players that are able to operate, continuously, with a full understanding of the shift of power between the attackers and defenders, will be capable of instinctively sensing the moment when the opponent has run out of options. To force your opponent into a single option and to take advantage of this situation to recover the ball, should be the aim of all remaining technical research in handball.

We should expose first the child, then the adolescent, to these situations. They should analyse the action, act to control it, force the opponent into the predictable and then take the ball and move towards the goal.