



## **7<sup>th</sup> EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FOR WOMEN**

**SWEDEN 2006**

### **QUALITATIVE TREND ANALYSIS**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 7th European Handball Championship for Women took place in Sweden from the 7th -17th December 2006.

Sixteen teams participated, 47 matches were played, and we witnessed a competition with several exciting matches and unpredictable results. Nevertheless, the six teams that played in the finals in Stockholm all deserved their position!

The competition was organised in four venues. The preliminary rounds were played in Stockholm, Skövde, Gothenburg and Malmö. The main rounds were played in Stockholm and Gothenburg, and the finals were played in Stockholm.

The Swedish Organising Committee and all the volunteers put in a lot of effort in order to make the 10 days a great experience.

Therefore, it was quite encouraging for the organisers that Sweden, not only qualified to the finals in Stockholm, but also achieved their best result in Europe to this date.

On the other hand, the fact that the audience figures were not as high as expected was rather disappointing. In several matches, the numbers of spectators did not quite meet the capacity of the venues. However 5000 cheering people on the day of the final created a great atmosphere around two exciting and well played matches.

The media interest for this championship was huge. According to the official website, 50 TV channels and 14 radio stations broadcasted the event in 70 countries. The final was seen live in Brazil, Argentina as well as in the Middle East. Impressive!

The qualitative analysis of the championship is mainly based on the matches played in the main rounds and the finals. However, statistics based on all the 16 teams are used in parts of the report.

Statistics can be useful but also misleading, and conclusions will often be subjective. However, statistics which will underscore my analysis as well as numbers which can be studied without further comments will be attached to this report.

I have chosen to pay an extra attention to the best ranked teams (1-4 / 1-6) by using video clips of the play situations. The video shows the characteristics of the teams, which successfully makes the example more than the critical analyses.

Finally, I would like to thank Frantisek Taborsky who was helpful with the analysis in the main round II matches in Stockholm.

## 2.0 – STATISTICAL PARAMETER

### 2.1 EURO 2006

#### Standings after main round

	GROUP I			GROUP II	
	pts	goal diff.		pts	goal diff.
NOR	10	49	RUS	10	33
GER	8	27	FRA	6	5
HUN	6	33	SWE	4	-11

#### Ranking EURO 2006

- 1 - NOR
- 2 - RUS
- 3 - FRA
- 4 - GER
- 5 - HUN
- 6 - SWE

Table 1

Norway won every match throughout the tournament and deserved the victory. The strength of the team was a solid 6:0 defence and great goalkeeping. This gave them the opportunity to take advantage of the fast breaks which really characterised Norway during this championship.

Russia had 2-3 top players in every position and was maybe the favourite. They achieved good results in the main round and played a solid semi-final. In the final though, they struggled with the pace of the game and lost against a better *team*.

France varied in their results, but was most impressive in the last part of the Championship. They were very close to defeating both Russia (24:25), and Norway. With skilful tactics, France indeed contributed to two exciting and close matches against the silver and gold medallist.

Germany was solid both in preliminary rounds and main round, skilful players in an organised team. However, Russia and France became too strong at the end of the tournament.

Hungary played a surprisingly weak game against Germany in the main round. They came back and played quite well against Norway, but without points they did not rank higher than number 3 in their group. With the exception of the game against Germany, Hungary pulled off a good championship – a fact that is supported by the statistics.

Sweden achieved their best result in a European Championship. Their play was rather uneven, as indicated by the results. They showed a strong collective play, and we got to see some interesting new players, who will be exciting to follow in years to come.

In my opinion both Croatia and Poland gave positive contributions to the championship. Croatia had the lowest average age and international matches played. Is this a team of the future?

#### All Star Team Euro 2006

<b>Goalkeeper</b>	Irina Suslina (RUS)
<b>Right wing</b>	Annika Wiel Freden (SWE)
<b>Right back</b>	Ibolva Mehlmann (HUN)
<b>Playmaker</b>	Gro Hammerseng (NOR)
<b>Pivot</b>	Ljudmila Bodnieva (RUS)
<b>Left back</b>	Nadine Krause (GER)
<b>Left wing</b>	Kari Mette Johansen (NOR)

<b>Top Scorer:</b>	Nadine Krause (GER), 58 goals
<b>Defence player</b>	: Isabelle Wendling (FRA)
<b>MVP:</b>	Gro Hammerseng (NOR).

## 2.2 HISTORY RANKING - EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Nation	No. ECh	Medals	Ranking	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
AUT	7	1	1	DEN	DEN	NOR	HUN	DEN	NOR	NOR
CRO	4	0	2	GER	NOR	DEN	UKR	NOR	DEN	RUS
DEN	7	5	3	NOR	AUT	HUN	RUS	FRA	HUN	FRA
ESP	4	0	4	HUN	GER	AUT	ROM	RUS	RUS	GER
FRA	4	2	5	CRO	ROM	POL	FRA	HUN	GER	HUN
GER	7	1	6	RUS	CRO	GER	NOR	YUG	UKR	SWE
HUN	7	3	7	SWE	RUS	UKR	YUG	ROM	ROM	CRO
MKD	3	0	8	CZE	SWE	MKD	MKD	CZE	ESP	POL
NED	3	0	9	AUT	UKR	RUS	GER	AUT	SLO	ESP
NOR	7	6	10	ROM	HUN	NED	DEN	SLO	AUT	AUT
POL	3	0	11	UKR	POL	ROM	BLR	GER	FRA	DEN
RUS	7	2	12	SVK	LTU	ESP	AUT	UKR	SCG	MKD
SLO	3	0	13					ESP	CRO	UKR
SRB	4	0	14					NED	SWE	SRB
SWE	5	0	15					SWE	CZE	NED
UKR	7	1	16					BLR	BLR	SLO

Table 2

Table 2 shows the results from all the seven organised European Championships.

Seven teams have participated in every championship, which indicates a high level for a long period of time. Of the 4 best teams in 2006, Norway, Russia and Germany have taken part in every championship.

Norway is 3 times winner, and has won medals in 6 out of 7 championship. With the gold medal in Sweden, they passed Denmark in numbers of medals.

## 2.3 TEAM PARAMETER

### Age / International matches

Team	AGE		IM	
	2004	2006	2004	2006
AUT	23,9	23,7	71,4	65,3
CRO	21,9	23,6	22,4	33,7
DEN	25,4	25,2	43,1	46,9
ESP	25,1	26,7	48,9	48,2
FRA	26,3	26,1	76,3	94,5
GER	26,2	24,8	74,6	76,3
HUN	26,8	25,4	73,6	71,9
MKD		24,1		50,9
NED		25,1		84,3
NOR	24,3	24,3	39,6	62,4
POL		26,3		56,8
RUS	22,6	24,4	37,5	60,4
SLO	27,5	27,1	60,3	66,2
SRB	23	25,4	23,5	34,7
SWE	25,1	25,6	67,9	60,8
UKR	25,9	27,4	31,1	56,1
<b>Average</b>	<b>24,9</b>	<b>25,3</b>	<b>51,6</b>	<b>60,6</b>

2002 16 teams	25,7	62,1
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Table 3

The average age for the 16 teams in 2006 was just a little higher in comparison to 2004 (average for 13 teams). Of the 4 best teams, only Germany had a lower average age. The number of international matches has increased since 2004. This increase is an important factor for most of the team.

### TP (time played)

Ranking 1-6	TP	No P	- 1 hr	1 hr +	2 hr +	3 hr +	4 hr +	5 hr +	6 hr +	7 hr - 8 hr
NOR	8:00:00	17	3	3	2	1	3	3	2	0
RUS	8:00:00	16	1	1	3	5	4	2	0	0
FRA	8:00:00	17	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
GER	8:00:00	16	3	2	0	4	3	2	2	0
HUN	7:00:00	16	1	2	4	5	3	1	0	
SWE *	7:00:00	17	5	4	0	1	4	1	2	

\* In the statistics, SWE operates with 18 players. One of them is not registered in matches. There are therefore only 17 players in this table.  
Table 4

Table 4 shows the players' playing time. Every team had players who were more significant than others, and therefore spent more time on the court. However, Russia did not have one single player who played more than 75 % of total time. This does not apply for the rest of the teams.

### New nomination and replacement during the Championship

Five teams used their right to nominate a new player during the Championship, CRO, DEN, FRA, NOR, SWE

### Height / Weight – Comparable figures 2004 - 2006

Nation	2004	HEIGHT					WEIGHT	
		No p.		- 169	170-179	180 +	2004	2006
NOR	176	17	177	2	7	8	68	71
RUS	179	16	181	1	5	10	69	71
FRA	175	17	173	4	12	1	69	67
GER	177	16	176	2	11	3	70	69
<b>1 - 4</b>			<b>177</b>	<b>2,3</b>	<b>8,8</b>	<b>5,5</b>		<b>69,5</b>
HUN	177	16	176	2	8	6	69	69
SWE	176	18	178	1	9	8	72	72
CRO	180	17	179	0	10	7	72	70
POL		16	176	2	11	3		68
<b>5 - 8</b>			<b>177</b>	<b>1,3</b>	<b>9,5</b>	<b>6,0</b>		<b>69,8</b>
ESP	172	16	172	5	9	2	68	67
AUT	177	16	178	2	7	7	67	69
DEN	176	17	178	2	6	9	69	72
MKD		16	177	2	9	5		72
<b>9 - 12</b>			<b>176</b>	<b>2,8</b>	<b>7,8</b>	<b>5,8</b>		<b>70,0</b>
UKR	177	16	174	5	6	5	71	67
SRB	175	16	176	4	7	5	66	71
NED		15	174	1	12	2		68
SLO	176	16	177	2	7	7	70	70
<b>13 - 16</b>			<b>175</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4,8</b>		<b>69,0</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>176</b>		<b>176</b>				<b>69</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Height, % distribution 2006</b>				14,2	52,1	33,7		
<b>Comparable figures 2002</b>				16,5	50,6	32,9	68	

Table 5

The table 5 shows average height and weight. Included in the table are the corresponding numbers for the same teams in 2004.

In the 2002 statistics, I found the height according to the distribution percentage of all the 16 teams that

participated. Comparing these numbers to the ones from 2006, I discovered that the percentage of players taller than 1.70, has increased.

### 3.0 GENERAL TRENDS

#### 3.1 GENERAL COMMENTS

It is always hard to compare matches and performances. Reaction is essential. How a team or an individual player succeeds in the play or in an action depends on the play of the opponent. The quality and the aspect of development is an interaction between the play and the reacting play.

However, a general impression of the championship is that the best teams have developed in their way of playing. They had a high competitive squad and many players with good skills. That was not the case for every team. In some matches, the difference in quality was quite big. This is also supported by the statistics.

It became clear rather early which three teams, from main round I, would qualify for the final round. Main round II was a bit tighter and only Russia won all matches in the preliminary round.

The main impression after having seen *the best teams* play against each other in Euro 2006 is that the tempo for most teams is higher in comparison to 2004. We saw several fine matches with high speed and good intensity from both teams – not to mention players with a great will to attack fast after gaining possession of the ball.

Without having sufficient information concerning the statistics of previous ECHs, I still have the impression that the 12 teams from main rounds had less firm substitutions (defence/attack) in this championship, compared to Euro 2004. However, I was surprised to register so many consistent substitutions as I did. At the same time, I consider many of the substitutions as a smart tactical move in regards to the capacity of the team and the disposal of the players.

The best teams ran the fast breaks before they changed players. A consistent substitute had less to say concerning the results in this phase, except a possible missing quality of the attacking substitute. However, the teams were more vulnerable in the defending fast break phase.

#### Number of attacks, goals and goal difference

		2006							2004		
TEAM	MP	ATTACKS		GOALS			GOAL DIFF.		ATTACKS Pr. match	GOALS Pr. match	GOAL DIFF. Pr. match
		Tot.	Pr.m.	Tot.	Pr.m.	Received	Tot.	Pr.m.			
NOR	8	499	62	258	32	179	79	9,9	66	32	8,5
RUS	8	508	64	242	30	200	42	5,3	63	28	1,4
FRA	8	494	62	203	25	196	7	0,9	64	26	-4
GER	8	497	62	228	29	208	20	2,5	59	26	1,4
HUN	7	462	66	234	33	186	48	6,9	60	30	2,4
SWE	7	419	60	156	22	170	-14	-2,0	58	23	-4,3
CRO	6	338	56	141	24	143	-2	-0,3	64	27	-2,3
POL	6	381	64	164	27	186	-22	-3,7			
ESP	6	371	62	150	25	149	1	0,2	64	26	-1,1
AUT	6	401	67	153	26	200	-47	-7,8	65	27	-1
DEN	6	370	62	148	25	156	-8	-1,3	60	25	1,6
MKD	6	358	60	138	23	167	-29	-4,8			
UKR	3	170	57	73	24	86	-13	-4,3	64	25	0,1
SRB	3	204	68	77	26	92	-15	-5,0	69	28	-5,8
NED	3	183	61	65	22	84	-19	-6,3			
SLO	3	204	68	80	27	108	-28	-9,3	65	27	-2,8
<b>Total 16 teams 06</b>		<b>62,3</b>		<b>26,7</b>					<b>63,2</b>		
									<b>27,0</b>		

1 - 4			62		29			4,6
5 - 8			61		27			0
9 - 12			63		25			-3
13 - 16			63		25			-6

Table 6

You would think that the numbers of attacks would increase for the teams which strongly believed in the high speed play. That is however, not the case. NOR had 4 attacks less on average per game compared to 2004, FRA had 2. On average for 16 teams, there was *one* attack less per game compared to 2004; this is shown in Table 6. The average score per game was *about the same* as in the previous championship.

#### Statistics of matches played among the best 4

2006									
		ATTACKS		GOALS				GOAL DIFFERENCE	
Ranking 1-4	MP	Total	Per Match	Total	Per Match	Received	Per Match	Total	Per Match
NOR	3	172	57	82	27	70	23	12	4,0
RUS	3	183	61	82	27	80	27	2	0,7
FRA	3	190	63	77	26	78	26	-1	-0,3
GER	3	198	66	76	25	89	30	-13	-4,3

Table 7

If we take a look at the statistics for the 4 best teams (Table 7), based on mutual games, both NOR and RUS had less attacks in these matches than they had in general throughout the championship. And in the final between these two teams, NOR is registered with 51 attacks and RUS registered 52. These figures are surprising. FRA and GER went beyond their average.

#### Score Statistics of Matches Played Among the Best Eight Teams – All Women ECh

Competition	Number of Matches	Average Score	Average Goals in 1 Match	Difference Winner-Loser	Difference in % (Winner = 100%)
ECh 1994	18	24,2 : 20,4	44,6	3,8	15,7 %
ECh 1996	18	26,8 : 21,7	48,5	5,1	19,0 %
ECh 1998	18	28,8 : 20,9	49,7	7,9	27,4 %
ECh 2000	18	27,3 : 22,7	50,0	4,6	16,8 %
ECh 2002	18	27,5 : 22,9	50,4	4,6	16,7 %
ECh 2004	18	28,5 : 25,1	53,6	3,4	11,9 %
ECh 2006	17	29,2 : 23,1	52,3	6,1	20,9 %

Table 8

Taborsky, status 21.12.2006

Table 8 shows calculations from the games between the 8 best teams from all the 7 European Championships. There is no increase in average goals in one game. The average score and the goal difference (winner - loser) however, is increasing (the score results are without extra time).

Comparing the goal difference, shown in table 7 from 2004-2006, I found that the 6 best teams had a better goal difference compared to 2004. This underlines my assertion that it was a relatively big difference in quality among

the teams in Euro 2006.

The fact that number of attacks does not increase, although the general impression is that the game has become quicker and with more pace, is hard to explain. But this does not necessarily imply a lack of progress.

A couple of factors, not covered by the statistics, could be a possible explanation:

- The teams played an active defence with lots of tackles, which again led to many stoppages in the game
- A calm build-up to the attacking play for most of the teams.
- Substitutions which required time (substitutions during the organised play)

In the further analyses I have chosen to deal with the main phases individually.

### 3.2 ORGANISED DEFENCE PLAY

#### Goals received, save percentage and goals in fast break

	MP	GOALS RECEIVED		GOALK.	FAST BREAK GOALS			BALL STEALING		BLOCKED SHOTS	
		Total	Per match	% S / S	Total	Per match	% of total goals	Total	Per match	Total	Per match
NOR	8	179	22,4	42	66	8,3	26	48	6,0	38	4,8
RUS	8	200	25,0	38	41	5,1	17	44	5,5	43	5,4
FRA	8	196	24,5	36	39	4,9	19	67	8,4	13	1,6
GER	8	208	26,0	35	40	5,0	18	49	6,1	31	3,9
HUN	7	186	26,6	39	39	5,6	17	41	5,9	34	4,9
SWE	7	170	24,3	35	19	2,7	12	25	3,6	27	3,9
CRO	6	143	23,8	37	27	4,5	19	22	3,7	18	3,0
POL	6	186	31,0	28	25	4,2	15	18	3,0	14	2,3
ESP	6	149	24,8	33	14	2,3	9	51	8,5	9	1,5
AUT	6	200	33,3	31	19	3,2	12	16	2,7	33	5,5
DEN	6	156	26,0	35	22	3,7	15	30	5,0	22	3,7
MKD	6	167	27,8	33	18	3,0	13	20	3,3	15	2,5
UKR	3	86	28,7	24	12	4,0	16	11	3,7	7	2,3
SRB	3	92	30,7	31	16	5,3	21	9	3,0	8	2,7
NED	3	84	28,0	34	6	2,0	9	11	3,7	8	2,7
SLO	3	108	36,0	28	7	2,3	9	3	1,0	2	0,7

1 - 4			24,5	38		5,8	20,0		6,5		3,9
5 - 8			24,3	35		4,2	16,0		4,0		3,5
9 - 12			28,0	33		3,0	12,0		4,9		3,3
13 - 16			30,8	29		3,4	13,9		2,8		2,1
<b>Total all matches</b>			<b>26,7</b>	<b>35</b>		<b>4,4</b>	<b>16,3</b>		<b>4,9</b>		<b>3,4</b>

Table 9

Table 9 illustrates goals received, the save percentage of the goalkeeper and goals scored in Fast Break. These factors are naturally connected. A good defence and a good goalkeeper are conditions for succeeding in the fast break phase.

The goalkeeper save percentage was 35 % average for 16 teams, 38 % for the best 4.

NOR was the team which received fewest goals. This is an average of 22.4 goals per game. A save percentage of 42% has indeed an influence on this average. CRO, SWE, FRA and ESP had also an average under 25% per game. These numbers apply for the *defence phases in total*.

FRA an ESP had most ball captures per game by stealing balls. Both teams had players who were ball-oriented

and who were good at snatching the ball. This provided FRA lots of FB goals, something ESP never managed to take advantage of.

The fact that ESP and FRA had correspondingly low average of block shots can be explained by many short players, the way of playing and defence formation. AUT, RUS, HUN and NOR had all tall players in their mid-defence and an average of 5 – 5.5 block shots per game. The 6:0 was also their most used defence formation.

#### Comparable figures from 2004

2004	MP	STEALING BALL		BLOCK SHOTS		Goalkeeper
		Total	Per match	Total	Per match	%
NOR	8	64	8,0	45	5,6	39
RUS	8	46	5,8	26	3,3	32
FRA	6	51	8,5	10	1,7	32
GER	7	31	4,4	23	3,3	33
<b>16 teams</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>5,6</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>2,6</b>	<b>34</b>

Table 10

#### Organised defence systems

Most of the teams had *one* primary formation which they used. However, due to tactical reasons or because of one particular change was more suitable to the players on the court; we saw variations in the tactical formations. GER was the team who changed their defence systems most often, even with the same players on the court. They used many formations in every game they played.

The 6:0 was the most common system for the majority of the 12 best teams in the main rounds. CRO and ESP however, played with more or less open systems throughout the championship.

I experienced that the players were both dynamic and flexible within the systems. And the teams played an active defence, with tackles and a desire to snatch the ball. Though the statistics imply that the number of ST per game was lower than in 2004 and that the number of BS was higher (Table 10), my impression is still that an “attacking” defence was more important than the passive one.

#### The main formation for the 12 best ranked teams

<b>NOR</b>	Mainly 6:0. Some 5:1 / 5+1
<b>RUS</b>	Mainly 6:0. Played 5:1 if they didn't have time to substitute.
<b>FRA</b>	Big variation of offensive variants, as 5:1, 5+1, 4:2, 3:3. Played also 6:0
<b>GER</b>	The most used systems were 6:0, 3:2:1 and 5:1. Also other variants.
<b>HUN</b>	Mainly 6:0, with dynamic left and right back. Also 4:2, 5:1 / 3:2:1.
<b>SWE</b>	6:0. Some tactical variations in the last game.
<b>CRO</b>	5:1, 3:2:1, 5+1
<b>POL</b>	6:0, 3:2:1, 5:1 / 5+1
<b>ESP</b>	1:5, 3:2:1, 3:3
<b>AUT</b>	6:0
<b>DEN</b>	6:0, 5:1
<b>MKD</b>	6:0

#### Organised defence for the Top 4

##### Received goals in the organised defence

2006	Total	Organised defence		Defending fast break
		Total	Per match	
NOR	8	179	20,4	16
RUS	8	200	18,8	50
FRA	8	196	22,1	19
GER	8	208	23,1	23

Table 11

**NOR**

Norway played a solid 6:0 defence. In my opinion, they strengthened their defence further when they took Annette Johansen off the bench and in as a defence player. That became clear in the final, but we also saw the same tactics successfully used in the match against FRA.

An active 6:0 defence and a good goalkeeper, was decisive for Norway's victory. Besides preventing goals from the opponent, the defence created possibilities for the fast break. [Video 3.2\\_1](#)

**RUS**

Russia played 6:0, but changed to 5:1 when Poltoratskaya did not have time to substitute. Russia had the most efficient organised defence of the top 4 teams (Table 11). They received in total 150 goals which resulted in 19 goals on average per game. Russia had tall players with good qualities at blocking shots. Romenskaya stood, according to the individual statistics, for about half the (20) block shots. And in the goal they had Suslina, the goalkeeper on all star team Euro 2006! [Video 3.2\\_2](#)

**FRA**

France played an active and a strong defence, in terms of movement. The main formations were 5:1 and 4:2 – with different variants, which they handled quite well. France was also both strong with one against one and active at seeking the ball. On average they had 8.4 ST per game. [Video 3.2\\_3](#)

**GER**

Germany played all their matches with variations of defence formations. It was not necessary for Germany to substitute players because they changed formation. Many players coped successfully with 6:0, 3:2:1 and 5:1 play. In my opinion a German team strength. [Video 3.2\\_4](#)

**3.3 THE FAST BREAK PHASES****Goals in fast break**

I have a general impression after Euro 2006 that more teams had developed the high speed of the fast break, and actively made use of the phase as an important part of their tactics.

That impression is unconfirmed according to statistics if the distribution in percentage of goals scored in FB is viewed separately. In 2004, 18.6% of the goals were scored in fast break, compared to 16.3% in 2006.

The high speed of the games for the best teams does not appear in the statistics. Neither do the *opponents play*. It is quite possible that the teams had improved their way of defending fast breaks!

The statistics tells us only about shots, goals and efficiency. The definition of fast breaks in the official statistics also excludes many goals and attempts in phase 3 or the second wave. I will come back to this.

However, it is interesting to compare the numbers. Table 12 and 13 show the division of the 12 best ranked teams and top 4 in the last championships. Only a few teams had a higher FB score in 2006 (CRO stands out).

**Fast break goals – percentages of total goals**

TEAM	MP	2006			2004			2002		
		Total score	Goals FB	% of goals	Total score	Goals FB	% of goals	Total score	Goals FB	% of goals
NOR	8	258	66	25,6	259	77	29,7	203	49	24,1
RUS	8	242	41	16,9	226	39	17,3	202	27	13,4
FRA	8	203	39	19,2	153	26	17,0	189	48	25,4
GER	8	228	40	17,5	183	28	15,3	142	27	19,0

<b>Total 1-4</b>		931	186	<b>20,0</b>	821	170	<b>20,7</b>	736	151	<b>20,5</b>
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HUN	7	234	39	<b>16,7</b>	236	26	<b>11,0</b>	223	37	<b>16,6</b>
SWE	7	156	19	<b>12,8</b>	68	10	<b>14,7</b>	79	11	<b>13,9</b>
CRO	6	141	27	<b>19,2</b>	82	8	<b>9,8</b>			
POL	6	164	25	<b>15,3</b>						
<b>Total 5-8</b>		695	110	<b>15,8</b>						

ESP	6	150	14	<b>9,3</b>	185	34	<b>18,4</b>	76	5	<b>6,6</b>
AUT	6	153	19	<b>12,4</b>	164	42	<b>25,6</b>	159	32	<b>20,1</b>
DEN	6	148	22	<b>14,9</b>	202	34	<b>16,8</b>	200	44	<b>22,0</b>
MKD	6	138	18	<b>13,0</b>						
<b>Total 9-12</b>		589	73	<b>12,4</b>						

Table 12

### Comparable figures for the 4 best in 2004 and 2002

Ranking 1- 4 2004				Ranking 1- 4 2002			
TEAM	Total score	Goals FB	% of goals	TEAM	Total score	Goals FB	% of goals
NOR	259	77	<b>29,7</b>	DEN	200	44	<b>22,0</b>
DEN	202	34	<b>16,8</b>	NOR	203	49	<b>24,1</b>
HUN	236	26	<b>11,0</b>	FRA	189	48	<b>25,4</b>
RUS	226	39	<b>17,3</b>	RUS	202	27	<b>13,4</b>
	923	176	<b>19,1</b>		794	168	<b>21,2</b>

Table 13

### Efficiency in the fast break

The average percentage in FB efficiency is higher than in 2004. Of the 4 best teams, FRA and NOR stand out with a considerable improvement (Table 14). A general impression of the Championship is that the best players had developed both their individually techniques, and the ability of making good decisions out of the situations. This might have been affecting the efficiency in FB.

2006	MP	FB EFFICIENCY			2004
		Attacks	Goals	%	
NOR	8	91	66	<b>73</b>	58
RUS	8	62	41	<b>66</b>	72
FRA	8	58	39	<b>67</b>	47
GER	8	65	40	<b>62</b>	65
HUN	7	59	39	<b>66</b>	
SWE	7	33	19	<b>58</b>	
CRO	6	42	27	<b>64</b>	
POL	6	47	25	<b>53</b>	
ESP	6	29	14	<b>48</b>	
AUT	6	33	19	<b>58</b>	
DEN	6	43	22	<b>51</b>	
MKD	6	38	18	<b>47</b>	
<b>1 - 4</b>		276	186	<b>67</b>	
<b>5 - 8</b>		181	110	<b>61</b>	
<b>9 - 12</b>		143	73	<b>51</b>	
<b>16 teams</b>				<b>61</b>	

### Comparable figures from 2004

<b>16 teams</b>			<b>56</b>
<b>1 - 4</b>			<b>59</b>

Table 14

## The fast break phases

To succeed in a quick fast break, technical, tactical and physical qualities are demanded. Not to mention the ability to quickly exploit the situation after:

- A mistake by the opponent
- Ball steal or blocking shots
- Saves by goalkeeper

This is demonstrated by FRA. [Video 3.3\\_1](#)

We are not talking about a collective system, but rather the skills and the will by the players to achieve a good position. The start phase was important. [Video 3.3\\_2](#) shows RUS, HUN and NOR.

The last example with HUN and the two with NOR, also shows that there are many players who were far ahead, playing not only with the traditional first and second wave. There was a strategy of attacking quickly!

There were lots of fast break goals that are not included in the official statistics. The fast break goals were registered by the definition:

- Individual FB - 1 pass
- Team FB - 2 - 4 passes

This excludes goals which in my opinion were scored in extended fast break (phase 3):

- When the team arrives with many players and exploits situations where the defence is not organised. (Transition between phase 2 and 3)
- Or continuing the pressure with all players (transition between phase 3 and 4). There is a continuous initiative and follow-up which the defence are unable to reorganise optimally.

Video 3.3\_3 shows examples of goals scored in *extended fast break* – and were not registered in the FB statistics. Goals scored in transition between two phases, will always be a subject of discussion. It depends how you define it. However, I have problems with characterising the goals shown in the video as goals scored in organised attacks. [Video 3.3\\_3](#)

In addition lots of *7m goals* were scored caused by situations in the fast break. These goals are not included in statistics of fast breaks goals either. [Video 3.3\\_4](#)

Table 15 shows the statistics from matches played in main round and in the final stages. Every goal scored in transition between phase 2 and 3 was registered (unofficial), and compared to the official statistics.

TEAM	MP	Official	Unofficial	Difference
NOR	5	38	49	11
RUS	5	24	26	2
FRA	5	21	24	3
GER	5	29	35	6
HUN	4	15	31	16
SWE	4	12	17	5

Table 15

This changed the statistics for every team. HUN had the biggest difference. In this overview, neither 7m goals as results of FB, nor goals scored with a full team pressure (transition between phase 3 and 4), are included.

I have had access to a compile statistics concerning the Norwegian team, where all factors are included. The statistics show that NOR scored a total of 101 goals in phase 2 and 3, including 7 m goals caused in the fast break. Considering these numbers, NOR scored 39.1% of their goals in fast break.

## Throw off

Fewer teams than expected made use of fast throw offs. GER, and to some extent NOR, were the two teams with most goals scored directly after throw off.

[Video 3.3 5](#) with GER and NOR shows examples of different ways to attack an unorganised defence. GER had effective systems and players with great will to carry through the pressure when needed. Throw offs from Norway were characterised more by individual initiative and follow-up.

### 3.4 ORGANISED ATTACK PLAY

#### Efficiency in organised attack

2006	MP	TOTAL EFFICIENCY			ORGANISED ATT. EFFICIENCY			ORGANISED ATT. EFFICIENCY 2004
		Attacks	Goals	%	Attacks	Goals	%	
NOR	8	499	258	52	408	192	47	46
RUS	8	508	242	48	446	201	45	42
FRA	8	494	203	41	436	164	38	39
GER	8	497	228	46	432	188	44	42
HUN	7	462	234	51	403	195	48	
SWE	7	419	156	37	386	137	35	
CRO	6	338	141	42	296	114	39	
POL	6	381	164	43	334	139	42	
ESP	6	371	150	40	342	136	40	
AUT	6	401	153	38	368	134	36	
DEN	6	370	148	40	327	126	39	
MKD	6	358	138	39	320	120	38	
1 - 4		1998	931	47	1722	745	43	
5 - 8		1600	695	43	1419	585	41	
9 - 12		1500	589	39	1357	516	38	
16 teams				43			40	

Comparable figures from 2004

16 teams				43			41
1 - 4				46			44

Table 16

Table 16 shows the efficiency of the organised attack play. For the 16 teams combined, the efficiency was higher in 2004. This was also the case for ranking 1-4 2004 and 1-4 2006. However NOR, RUS and GER had all improved their efficiency in this phase. (1-3%)

#### Organised attack – shot efficiency in positions

2006	EFFICIENCY % GOALS/SHOTS						
	1 - 6	MP	7mP	6mC	Wing	BT	9m
NOR	8	78	72	65	66	36	56
RUS	8	66	62	53	81	46	57
FRA	8	76	72	39	81	31	57
GER	8	66	66	45	74	43	52
HUN	7	86	82	57	71	41	56
SWE	7	63	70	52	63	34	47
16 teams 06		72	67	51	72	34	49

2004	EFFICIENCY % GOALS/SHOTS					
	1 - 6 in 2006	MP	7mP	6mC	Wing	BT
NOR	8	76	68	61	76	39
RUS	8	63	81	52	66	37
FRA	6	75	57	48	74	31
GER	7	62	64	55	79	32
HUN	8	91	72	53	79	41
SWE	3	64	72	45	53	30
16 teams 04		72	68	52	71	33

Table 17

Table 17 shows shot efficiency in position for the best 6 in 2006, and totally for 16 teams. A calculated total shot efficiency in organised attack, was **49%** in 2006 compared to **50%** in 2004.

The shot efficiency in all attacking phases shows 60% for RUS and NOR, 58% for HUN, 55% for GER and 49% for FRA and SWE.

### Organised attack – goals distribution, % of total goals in organised attacks

2006 GOALS DISTRIBUTION												
1 - 6 in 2006	MP	Total	7mP	%	6mC	%	Wing	%	BT	%	9m	%
NOR	8	192	28	14,6	36	18,8	54	28,1	25	13,0	49	25,5
RUS	8	201	33	16,4	43	21,4	31	15,4	34	16,9	60	29,9
FRA	8	164	19	11,6	43	26,2	20	12,2	17	10,4	65	39,6
GER	8	188	21 21 21	11,2	42	22,3	31	16,5	25	13,3	69	36,7
HUN	7	195	31	15,9	31	15,9	37	19,0	27	13,8	69	35,4
SWE	7	137	17	12,4	19	13,9	32	23,4	18	13,1	51	37,2
<b>Total 16 teams 06</b>				<b>15,3</b>		<b>18,2</b>		<b>17,9</b>		<b>14,2</b>		<b>34,5</b>

Table 18

### Comparable figures from 2004

2004 GOALS DISTRIBUTION												
1 - 6 in 2006	MP	Total	7mP	%	6mC	%	Wing	%	BT	%	9m	%
NOR	8	182	42	23,1	26	14,3	46	25,3	25	13,7	43	23,6
RUS	8	187	33	17,6	43	23,0	34	18,2	23	12,3	54	28,9
FRA	6	127	24	18,9	17	13,4	27	21,3	20	15,7	39	30,7
GER	7	155	24	15,5	35	22,6	36	23,2	19	12,3	41	26,5
HUN	8	210	39	18,6	28	13,3	40	19,0	22	10,5	81	38,6
SWE	3	58	77	12,1	21	36,2	9	15,5	8	13,8	13	22,4
<b>Total 16 teams 04</b>				<b>20,5</b>		<b>16,7</b>		<b>21,5</b>		<b>12,5</b>		<b>28,7</b>

Table 19

The tables 18 and 19 show the percentage distribution of goals in the different positions in 2006 and in 2004. They are calculated from the total number of goals in organised attack. The largest difference is shown in 7mP and 9m.

### The organised attack phase

We did not see a lot of new elements in the organised attacking play. One exception is perhaps DEN which replaced the goalkeeper with a player without being at a numerical disadvantage. (7 against 6)

[Video 3.4\\_1](#)

A general impression is that the best teams played a faster attacking play, with more intense actions. The teams had players with improved technical skills. In spite of a lower shot efficiency, I think the players have developed their shot repertoire, as well as their ability to make good tactical decisions.

The following video clips show characteristics of organised attack from the best ranked 6 teams.

**NOR** – The team had developed a faster, more intensive play, active piston movements as individual actions or part of the collective systems. Common initiations were permutation (changing of position by the back players) and transitions or individual piston movements followed up by the other players.

Norway had a large score (efficiency and % distribution) from the wing position. Skilful players who made the most of their chances after the play had outnumbered the defence.

[Video 3.4\\_2](#)

- Outnumbering by reversing the play
- Changing of position of back players with different initiations and solutions / results
- Transition from the centre back against more open defence
- Wing initiatives

**RUS** – The attacking play of Russia was characterised by the piston movements, powerful shooters and the effective screenings of the pivots. The cooperation between the back players and the 6m line players was highly developed. The back players showed a technique and a balance in their movements which enable them to choose different actions (passes, shooting, faking) in a given situation.

[Video 3.4\\_3](#)

- Transition. From centre back. Against 6:0 and 3:2:1
- Transition from wing player. Against 6:0 and 4:2
- 2 pivots
- 9m throw – Possibilities for Polinova

**FRA** – Transitions, especially from the player Wendling transferring to the 6m line without the ball, was characteristic for the French team. The French players were good at reacting to the defence actions.

[Video 3.4\\_4](#)

- Transition from left back / right back position to *the same* side, initiated by a pass to the pivot. Variations in the following-up
- Transition from right back position opposite side
- Transition from right back position opposite side, false transition
- Transition from centre back position, against 6:0 and 5:1
- Crossing in the wing player created movements that brought the distance shooters in good position. France scored 40% of the goals in this phase from 9m

**GER** – Germany had a well organised attack play and they were successful with different systems. The video shows examples of their transition play.

[Video 3.4\\_5](#)

- Transition of middle back player. Blocking (by 1 and 2 players) created a lot of possibilities for the skilful distance shooters Krause and Jurack, and for the 6m line players
- Transition of wing player. Long movements, as the back players kept pressure, created conflicts in the defence

**HUN** – Technical skilful players, good at individual initiative and following-up, and a team with competent distant shooters.

[Video 3.4\\_6](#)

- Players who attack gaps, creating possibilities of majority play
- Permutation, changing of position by the back players
- Initiation by passing pivot, in combination with transition without the ball

**SWE** – Sweden scored 60% of the goals in organised attack from wing position and 9m. The team played organised with good individual qualities.

[Video 3.4\\_7](#)

- Transition of right back (without the ball) after preliminary crossing movements opposite wing
- Systems with active blocking helping the back players in shot position
- Transition play
- Outnumbering by reversing the play after permutation

### **3.5 THE FAST RETREAT PHASE**

MP		GOALS RECEIVED	RECEIVED FB GOALS	
		Total	Total	% of total goals
NOR	8	179	16	8,9
RUS	8	200	50	25,0
FRA	8	196	19	9,7
GER	8	208	23	11,1
HUN	7	186	30	16,1
SWE	7	170	22	12,9
CRO	6	143	16	11,2
POL	6	186	26	14,0
ESP	6	149	37	24,8
AUT	6	200	46	23,0
DEN	6	156	21	13,5
MKD	6	167	22	13,2
UKR	3	86	16	18,6
SRB	3	92	22	23,9
NED	3	84	13	15,5
SLO	3	108	30	27,8
<b>1 - 4</b>				
	32	783	108	<b>13,8</b>
<b>5 - 8</b>				
	26	685	94	<b>13,7</b>
<b>9 - 12</b>				
	24	672	126	<b>18,8</b>
<b>13 - 16</b>				
	12	370	81	<b>21,9</b>
<b>Total 16 teams</b>				
		2510	409	<b>16,3</b>

Table 20

Table 20 shows the number of received FB goals for all the teams.

NOR, FRA, GER and CRO are the teams which received fewest goals in this phase. The average numbers are quite increasing from ranking 1-8 to 9-16.

The statistics show however, that only RUS (ranked second), was far beyond average of the 16 teams in the percentage share of received fast break goals. Table 21, received goals against the other 4 best teams, strengthens the impression that this was the weakest part of Russia's defence play (34%).

#### Statistic from matches played among the best 4

<b>NOR</b>	Tot goals received	Goals FB received	% of goals received	<b>FRA</b>	Tot goals received	Goals FB received	% of goals received
Opponent				Opponent			
GER	22	0	-	RUS	25	3	12,0
FRA	24	4	16,7	NOR	28	3	10,7
RUS	24	1	4,2	GER	25	5	20,0
<b>TOTAL</b>	70	5	7,1	<b>TOTAL</b>	78	11	14,1

<b>RUS</b>	Tot goals received	Goals FB received	% of goals received	<b>GER</b>	Tot goals received	Goals FB received	% of goals received
Opponent				Opponent			
FRA	24	8	33,3	NOR	27	5	18,5
GER	29	9	31,0	RUS	33	5	15,2
NOR	27	10	37,0	FRA	29	3	10,3
<b>TOTAL</b>	80	27	33,8	<b>TOTAL</b>	89	13	14,6

Table 21

The official statistics also tell that RUS had the highest number of technical faults of the best 4 ranked teams, which of course is relevant to the number of received goals in the fast retreat phase.

I can see a connection between the share of goals received in the fast retreat phase, and share of goals scored in fast break (Table 12) for many of the teams. NOR, FRA, GER and CRO also scored a lot of goals in fast break.

Pace and the ability to play a fast-paced game are important qualities for both phases. And teams which focus on the fast-paced play also get the practice in the reactionary play.

Important qualities and actions for the teams in obstructing the opponents' fast break goals are:

- o Fast anticipation of the situations, both in quick starting and through the retreat defence
- o High speed in running
- o Marking and pressing players
- o Delaying the attacking play by closing the player with the ball
- o Active goalkeeper preventing long passes

From the matches in Euro 2006, we saw these factors in higher or lower degrees. The video shows some successful examples.

[Video 3.5\\_1](#)

A further development of the fast break phases will require even bigger demands to the reaction play than we witnessed in this championship, with individual and collective tactics in terms of defending against the fast break.

### 3.6 PLAY IN NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY AND INFERIORITY

#### Efficiency and percentage of all goals scored in numerical superiority / inferiority

TEAM	2006									2004		
	Majority eff.			Minority eff.			Total goals	Goals M/M	% of the goals	Majority eff. %	Minority eff. %	% of the goals
	Att.	G	%	Att.	G	%						
<b>NOR</b>	76	52	<b>68</b>	33	15	<b>45</b>	258	67	<b>26</b>	55	34	25
<b>RUS</b>	66	39	<b>59</b>	47	18	<b>38</b>	242	57	<b>24</b>	56	37	29
<b>FRA</b>	62	33	<b>53</b>	57	16	<b>28</b>	203	49	<b>24</b>	53	19	20
<b>GER</b>	48	25	<b>52</b>	32	8	<b>25</b>	203	33	<b>16</b>	51	43	32
<b>Total 1-4</b>			<b>59</b>			<b>34</b>						
<b>HUN</b>	27	19	<b>70</b>	43	20	<b>47</b>	234	39	<b>17</b>	56	32	26
<b>SWE</b>	52	22	<b>42</b>	38	9	<b>24</b>	156	31	<b>20</b>	46	16	21
<b>CRO</b>	44	21	<b>48</b>	31	8	<b>26</b>	141	29	<b>21</b>	66	14	33
<b>POL</b>	51	27	<b>53</b>	29	12	<b>41</b>	164	39	<b>24</b>			
<b>Total 5-8</b>			<b>51</b>			<b>35</b>			<b>20</b>			
<b>ESP</b>	45	22	<b>49</b>	40	14	<b>35</b>	150	36	<b>24</b>	48	20	24
<b>AUT</b>	49	27	<b>55</b>	33	13	<b>39</b>	153	40	<b>26</b>	43	30	21
<b>DEN</b>	40	25	<b>63</b>	39	12	<b>31</b>	148	37	<b>25</b>	54	38	27
<b>MKD</b>	39	19	<b>49</b>	30	7	<b>23</b>	138	26	<b>19</b>			
<b>Total 9-12</b>			<b>54</b>			<b>32</b>			<b>24</b>			
<b>Total 16 teams</b>			<b>56</b>			<b>33</b>			<b>23</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>

Table 22

The statistics tell us nothing about in which phases the goals have been scored – fast break or organised attack. I

assume that many of the FB goals were scored in numerical superiority or inferiority. My comments however, and the videos I will show, are all from organised attacks.

## Majority

All together, the teams had a better efficiency in majority compared to 2004. HUN, NOR, AUT, and DEN had the biggest improvement.

I found nothing really new regarding majority play in organised attack. However, we saw a lot of good examples of conscious collective play, and players making successful decisions.

**NOR** – Played varied formations. The video shows examples of attacks with good usage of width, initiative and high tempo. Norway played mainly with one pivot, but also performing transitions from back positions. [Video 3.6\\_1](#)

**RUS** - Played mostly with two pivots, permanent or after transition. Individual good players in a system where the collaboration between pivots and back players always was a threat to the opponents defence. Good at keeping the play going. [Video 3.6\\_2](#)

**FRA** – Played with good actions from 6m line, using normally 2 pivots. FRA had skilful players who were able to create promising situations. [Video 3.6\\_3](#)

**GER** - Played with different systems. Good at taking advantage of the width. GER poses a strong threat in terms of shots with Jurack in the middle back position. [Video 3.6\\_4](#)

**HUN** - The team had players who were good at creating conflicts within the opponents defence. HUN used one pivot. [Video 3.6\\_5](#)

**SWE** - A collective play with good usage of width, exemplified through wing shots after transition from middle back player. [Video 3.6\\_6](#)

**The majority defence** we witnessed in the finals in Stockholm, was pretty much corresponding to what the teams had performed in previously matches - a dynamic defence with primarily 6:0, 5:1, 5+1 and 4+2 as formations.

## Minority

For all the 16 teams, the efficiency for play in minority was about the same as in last championship. The table shows however, that teams as HUN, NOR, FRA, CRO, ESP and AUT had increased their efficiency considerable.

In parts of all matches, also in decisive periods, the teams played with *one* player less. I found several examples of conscious strategies in creating goals possibilities. When it comes to the best teams, a passive and destructive attacking play, of the teams that are in numerical minority, is history.

Many teams chose to replace the goalkeeper with another player in the minority play, NOR made use of this tactic quite often - sometimes successfully.

The video shows examples of high intensity and situations created by good movement. The video also illustrates a collective play which fails to progress and individual players who stood out, showing individual skills. The video includes clips from FRA, HUN, NOR, SWE and RUS.

[Video 3.6\\_7](#)

**The minority defence** was mainly 5:0, with a few tactical exceptions.

## Goals scored in numerical superior / inferior, percentage of all goals

Twenty-three percent of all goals in 2006 were scored in numerical superior or inferior. In 2004 the figure was 27%.

I will not put too much in this difference. However I note that several teams scored about a quarter of their goals in

a numerical superior or inferior situation.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

- The matches in Euro 2006 showed an increase in the pace of the game. I believe this will be further developed in years to come.
- The increasing intensity of the play and the hard match schedule require a highly competitive squad. To further develop the players of today contemporary with bringing new talents on the court, is a challenge for all nations.
- More highly competitive players in the teams probably bring different qualities into the play.
- Faster games mean faster decision-making during the play. I believe we will see an improved individual capacity in the future, physical qualifications as well as technical and tactical skills.
- Many teams changed players in attack – defence. In the further development of the high speed game, this will be a huge advantage for the teams developing players able to play in each phase.
- The high speed of the game created situations which were rather unorganised. This fact makes requirements on the players' capacity to act also in different positions on the court.
- Nearly 25% of the goals were scored in majority or minority. The teams had increased their efficiency in playing numerical imbalance. Especially in play numerical advantage. In the inferior play we saw a team strategy in creating goals possibilities more than passive play by the best teams.
- In organised defence many teams were able to play different formations, and players with active and dynamic actions. An increasing individual capacity will probably cause more variations in the future.
- Development is a relative term. The qualitative development in handball will be seen in an interaction between the play and the reaction play. Individually one against one and in teams' performance. Development in one phase will therefore create development in the opposite phase.
- Consequences of developing the fast break phases will be an improved capacity and tactics in the fast retreat phase. I believe this will be a task for all teams in the years to come.