



**EHF CHAMPIONSHIP
HANDBALL**

EHF M20 CHAMPIONSHIP 1. 2022 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

02 – 10 July 2022 Varna, Bulgaria

Ante Burger /CRO

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INTRODUCTION

Event

The competition in the European Younger Age Category, [M20 EHF Championship 1 2022](#), took place in Varna, Bulgaria, from Saturday, 2 July until Sunday, 10 July. At the draw event in February, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Finland, and Bulgaria were drawn in group A, whereas Austria, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Türkiye, and Georgia were placed in group B. After the matches played within each group, the two teams with the highest number of points played the semi-finals, whereas the third and the fourth team played cross matches for the ranking between 5th and 8th place. The team that is ranked 5th in Group B falls out of the competition. In total, 24 matches were played at this competition. All the results for the group phase of the competition can be found at the following [link](#).

Venue

The host city of this M20 EHF Championship 1 was the city of Varna, the largest Bulgarian city on the Black Sea and the third largest city in Bulgaria, with a population of 350000 people. The Championship took place at the Congress Hall of the Palace of Culture and Sports in Varna. It is a multifunctional complex for congress, cultural, and sporting events with six multi-purpose halls, a recreation center, a fitness center, a press center, and a modern shopping center. The hall capacity is 5116 seats and can be adapted depending on the type of competition. Interestingly, the [M20 EHF Championship 2 2022](#) also took place in Varna, from 16 July to 24 July, right after this competition, and the host excelled in good and quality organization.

Atmosphere and number of spectators

It was a great success for the EHF that the competition was even organized during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is good for the popularization of handball that the competition was held in a country that does not have notable results in this sport. The number of spectators at the matches was not as high as it usually is in traditional handball countries. Such results are expected considering that handball is not covered by the media that much in Bulgaria. The EHF should certainly be praised for assigning the organization of this M20 EHF Championship to Bulgaria and setting long-term guidelines for the promotion and popularization of handball in other European countries.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Main data about players and teams

A total of 142 players from 9 national teams took part in the tournament. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only three national teams played with the maximum 16 players throughout the Championship, namely the Czech Republic, Latvia and Slovakia. The other 6 national teams did not have the maximum number of allowed players, which certainly made it difficult for the coaches to rotate within the team. This situation forced the coaching staff of the national teams to a different physical and tactical preparation of their teams.

Age

Table 1 contains age data for all the players who played in the Championship. The players were divided according to their year of birth as follows: players born in 2002, players born in 2003, and players born from 2004 onwards. The analysis of the obtained data shows that the highest number of players were born in 2002 (42.85%). Interestingly, 20.71% of players were born from 2004 onwards, which can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic and a small number of quality players in this competitive age group. The oldest national teams in terms of age were the teams of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which did not have a single player born from 2003 onwards. Türkiye had only 4 players born in 2002/2003, whereas other 12 players were younger. A player that should be specially mentioned is Sadik Emre Herseklioglu, born in 2007, who stood out with his player quality despite being a few years younger than the other players. The obtained results were expected since these national teams are not among European top-level teams. Selectors and coaches in national teams and clubs should pay special attention to chronological age, biological age, and training age. Poor selections are often made during the selection process of players for national teams because these three components are not properly analyzed. Thus, coaches do not invite players born in odd years to the national team because of their physical component, which is inferior to some teammates. This is due to the coaches' impatience for the results, while, ultimately, players with perhaps greater potential are not invited to the national team.

Players born in 2002				Players born in 2003				Players born from 2004 onwards
60 (42.85%)				51 (36.42 %)				29 (20.71%)
1 st quarter	2 nd quarter	3 rd quarter	4 th quarter	1 st quarter	2 nd quarter	3 rd quarter	4 th quarter	
15 (10.71%)	17 (12.14%)	17 (12.14%)	11 (7.85%)	11 (7.85%)	19 (13.57%)	10 (7.14%)	11 (7.85%)	29 (20.71%)

Table 1. Distribution of the dates of birth of players involved in this Championship (number and percentage). Source: Official Squad sheets

Table of results:

All the results of the M20 EHF Championship 1 2022 can be found at the following [link](#).

The winner of this Championship was the Czech Republic national team, with a maximum performance of 5 wins. The Czech Republic and Austria were undefeated until they met in the final match. With a final score of 32:26, the Czech Republic national team won the gold medal, whereas the Austrian team had to settle for the silver medal. The 3rd place match was played by the Netherlands and Finland. The Netherlands was superior from the very beginning of the match and won the bronze medal with a score of 42:32. In the cross matches for the ranking between 5th and 8th place Latvia won 5th place with a 39:37 score against Slovakia. The national team of Georgia won 7th place by defeating the host Bulgaria with a score of 29:27. The last, 9th place, was won by the Turkish national team, which, after the opening four defeats in group "B", fell out of this competition without playing the cross matches.

It is interesting that, during the entire tournament, not a single match ended in a draw, and there were no overtimes. A third of the matches ended with a goal difference of 0-3 goals, which emphasized the uncertainty of the result. All Cross Matches for ranking from 5th to 8th place ended with a 1-3 goal difference, which made this part of the tournament highly uncertain in terms of the result. Unfortunately, there was no result uncertainty in the semi-finals and finals, as those matches ended with a 6-10 goal difference. The winning teams in those matches increased the goal difference from the very beginning, which ultimately led to such high scores.

Single match goal difference	
Goal difference	Number of matches
0-3	8 (33.3%)
4-6	6 (25%)
7-9	4 (16.66%)
10+	6 (25%)

Table 2. Single match goal difference (number of matches and percentage in overall matches).

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Offense

The total of 1444 goals were scored in 24 matches of the European Championship, which is an average of 30.8 goals per team. These results are congruent with previous research of this type conducted on championships for men under 20 years of age. In table 3, which shows the average number of goals scored, Slovakia is in first place (34.33), the Czech national team is in second place (33.60), whereas the Netherlands is in third place with 33.33 average goals scored. Türkiye and Bulgaria, with the average of 25.75 and 25.75 goals scored, respectively, are in the last two places on the Most and least scored goals per game table, which is ultimately reflected in the overall ranking.

Most scored goals per game (AV)		Least scored goals per game (AV)	
SVK	34.33	LAT	28.40
CZE	33.60	FIN	26.82
NED	33.33	BUL	26.41
AUT	31.16	TUR	25.75
GEO	28.66		

Table 3. Most and least scored goals per game

In the Percentage of total realization table, the national teams of the Netherlands and Austria are in first place, with an average of 65.60% and 63.61% of realization, respectively. Interestingly, the Czech national team, with a 61.10% percentage of total realization, is in 5th place even though they finished this Championship in 1st place. Obviously, some other performance parameters were crucial for winning the M20 EHF Championship 1 2022, which will be analyzed in the following chapters. Likewise, Georgia is in a high third place with a percentage of 62.11% of total realization, and they finished the Championship in 7th place in the overall ranking.

Highest efficiency		Lowest efficiency	
NED	65.60%	BUL	57.12%
AUT	63.61%	LAT	57.00%
GEO	62.11%	FIN	55.11%
SVK	61.32%	TUR	50.71%
CZE	61.10%		

Table 4. Percentage of total realization

The efficiency of realization of 7-meter shots is a very important parameter of success of any team that hopes to win one of the medals in the tournament. A realization percentage of 75% or more can be considered successful, whereas anything below that average can create problems for teams aiming for a top result. In this Championship, Austria had a high percentage of realization from the 7-meter line, 84.0%, whereas Finland, with 77.8%, and Latvia, with 76.2%, were in second and third place, respectively. Türkiye and Bulgaria had the weakest realization in this parameter of handball play, about 60%, which cannot be considered sufficient for achieving good results.

	Ave. per game most		Ave. per game fewest
AUT	84.0%	TUR	60.0%
FIN	77.8%	BUL	61.1%
LAT	76.2%	NED	68.0%

Table 5. Efficiency of realization of 7-meter shots

Shooting from 6 meters is considered the most favorable situation for achieving a goal. These situations usually leave room for a rally between the goalkeeper and the players. The Netherlands had the best percentage of realization of 6-meter shots (69.23%). The Czech Republic was in 6th place, with 64.39%. Türkiye and Finland were in the last two places, with 60% or less, which drastically weakened the chances of winning one of the medals.

Highest efficiency		Lowest efficiency	
NED	69.23%	CZE	64.39%
GEO	68.25%	SVK	62.89%
AUT	67.53%	FIN	60.00%
BUL	66.19%	TUR	56.71%
LAT	65.34%		

Table 6. Efficiency of realization of 6-meter shots

The efficiency of realization of 9-meter shots can be divided into 3 categories: highly successful realization, average realization, and less successful realization. The highest efficiency refers to the percentage of realization over 60%. Only the Netherlands achieved such a percentage of realization (61.16%) from 9 meters due to the quality of the backcourt players. Average efficiency refers to 50-60% of average realization from backcourt positions. The national teams of Georgia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Austria had such a percentage of realization. The national teams of Finland, Latvia, and Türkiye had a realization below 50% from the 9-meter line, which is considered the lowest efficiency.

Highest efficiency		Lowest efficiency	
NED	61.16%	AUT	50.00%
GEO	55.45%	FIN	47.82%
SVK	54.54%	LAT	46.07%
CZE	51.94%	TUR	44.68%
BUL	51.54%		

Table 7. Efficiency of realization of 9-meter shots

After analyzing the previous tables where the average realization of success from 6, 7 and 9 meters is calculated, it is evident that the Netherlands, Georgia, and Austria are in one of the first three places. However, in the final ranking, the Czech national team, which won all the matches at this European Championship, was in first place. Therefore, a question can be asked: which parameter of situational efficiency highly influences the final ranking? The answer to this question can be found further in the text under Goalkeepers Team Statistics.

Tactical variants of attack in 6:6 play

Tactical variants in attack generally started with basic variants which are usually used by many teams regardless of the competition level. The most frequently used action is the crossing between center back and pivot, after which the action develops depending on team's coordination level and the defense zone attacked. The [video](#) contains different variants of this start, the basis of which was an attack start which was then followed by a crossing or some other attack element, depending on the positioning of the defensive players. In addition to the classic position changes in tactical variants, cutting to the line of wing or backcourt players was used, which created a variant of play with two players in the pivot position. The Slovak national team made excellent use of the [action](#) of winger cutting in: #8 Jacub Kolenic would move to the center of the attack and cross with the right back #28 Imrich Hruby, who would then usually shoot from the backcourt position. The Netherlands had particularly good preparation in the attack phase; they used different actions and starts, which created problems for many teams. In center backcourt position, #3 Thomas Houtepen organized the attack of his team well. The [video](#) shows a simple tactical variant in attack in which #3 Thomas Houtepen crosses with the right back #6 Eussen Ids, which is immediately followed by returning the ball and cutting between right or left and far defender. The second video shows excellent cooperation between these players where, by quality change of positions and good crossing, they create a position for realization from wide positions.

The Netherlands and the Czech Republic had the best solutions in the attack. Their creativity and attractiveness, which they strived for in offensive actions, are enjoyable. The attractive actions found in this [video](#) contribute to the popularization of the handball game, and are an indication that these 20-year-old young men can already cope equally with the tasks of senior handball. Even though this is not the strongest category of competition for national teams, it is noticeable that the national teams of the Czech Republic, Austria, the Netherlands, and Slovakia have a place among the best national teams of the Old Continent.

Tactical variants of attack in 6:5 play

Playing with man advantage is an important factor of situational efficiency of every team, which ultimately has a great impact on the result. Unfortunately, coaches of some teams pay little attention to this segment of the game, so when the man advantage occurs, the numerical superiority compared to a team with only five players on the court is poorly used. Average efficiency of man advantage was 55.1% (the team gained result advantage during the man advantage situation) in all teams, which is still somewhat lower in comparison to elite men's national teams in which the efficiency was 59.5% (Burger, 2017). At this European Championship, different tactical variants of attacks were observed in teams that had well-organized actions that led to a safe and quick realization during the man advantage. The Czech Republic mostly used an [action](#) in which pivot #29 Jazek Zdenek was positioned at central back and by blocking that player after thrusting from wide positions, man advantage was created for the opposite back or wingman.

Reference: Burger, A., Krespi, M., Pejić, D., Bjelanović, L., Ledić, I. (2017). Analysis of the success of the player's execution and the success of the first attack after the time-out in men and women in top handball. 3rd International scientific and professional meeting "Physiotherapy in sports, recreation and wellness", Vukovar, 251-259.

The Netherlands used an [action](#) in which the central back crossed with the left wing, followed by passing the ball to the left back, who crossed with the right back. The task of the right back was to transfer the ball to the central back who was at the position of the left back. By performing these movements well, the positioning in 2:1 play is set in which the central back cuts or passes the ball to the left wing.

Finland used an [action](#) during man advantage in which their best player, pivot #20 Viktor Gronmark, was positioned between the first far right defender and the second right defender. Central back, #34 Benjamin Peitsaro, moved from the central backcourt position to the pivot position by the central defender. Left back, #9 Edward Hammarberg, had several solutions in this variant – he could pass the ball to one of the pivots or to a free wingman.

Tactical variants of attack in 7:6 play

The 7:6 attack was used only by several teams as a tactical variant in situations when the teams could not find solutions in 6:6 play. Coaches usually use it when they notice that their team has poor shot realization. This especially occurs in teams which, due to their lack of quality or team coordination, have trouble creating opportunities for shot realization. At the M20 EHF Championship 1 2022 in Varna, Bulgarian and Latvia chose this model of play. Bulgarian [action](#) in 7:6 play required greater tactical preparation – after crossing and changing positions, #7 Valentino Milen and #44 Bozhidar Simeonov moved to positions between second and third and fourth and fifth defender. The back player was now open to shoot from the central position or pass to one of the pivots. The Latvian variant of the [7:6 play](#) was similar to the Bulgarian action. After a crossing between backcourt player #19 Ralfs Geislars and pivot #25 Renars Grebennikovs, the play included two pivotmen positioned between 2nd and 3rd and 4th and 5th defenders. Successive passing from a piston movement was then usually followed by a shot from the backcourt position. The other national teams in the tournament used the 7:6 play less because their attacks were effective in the 6:6 play with an equal number of players.

Tactical variants of attack in 5:6 play

The coaches usually tactically solved the 5:6 attack by taking out the goalkeeper and bringing in an attacker. The risk of playing without a goalkeeper was taken on by all national teams at the Championship when they had a suspended player. By replacing a goalkeeper with a player, they would get an equal number of players on the court and there would be a greater chance of scoring a goal. In addition to an equal number of players on the court, the flow and threat of the attack would be achieved, which would gain time until the return of the excluded player. Tactical discipline is especially manifested in this segment of handball play, and the national teams proved to be well-trained for this variant of play. Of course, there is always a possibility of losing the ball due to a technical error, which opens up the possibility of scoring an easy goal. Taking on the risk in these situations proved to be more acceptable than playing with one player less.

Defense

Team	Formation in organized defense
CZE	6:0 defense (classic up to 9 meters)
AUT	6:0 defense (classic up to 8 meters)
NED	6:0 defense aggressive 6:0 with transformation in 5:1 5:1 defense mainly aggressive and deep
FIN	6:0 defense (classic up to 9 meters)
LAT	6:0 defense (classic up to 7 meters) (2 and 4) aggressive
SVK	6:0 defense (classic up to 9 meters) 5:1 defense
BUL	6:0 defense (classic up to 8 meters) 5:1 defense 5+1 on the best opponent player
GEO	6:0 defense (classic up to 8 meters)
TUR	6:0 defense (classic up to 8 meters) 5:1 defense

Table 8. Shows the standard and commonly used formations of the participating teams at *M20 EHF Championship 1 2022*

The defensive tactical formations chosen by the coaches at this European Championship were mostly 6:0 or 5:1 zone defense with minor or major modifications. There were no innovative variants that would add new value to handball tactics. Most national teams used the 6:0 defense (classic up to 8 meters) as a starting tactical option. The Turkish national team opted for the 5:1 tactical starting zone formation with a deep move forward with which they tried to stop the opponent's attacks. Unfortunately, problems in their defense occurred due to weak tactical discipline, especially in the central part of the defense. Frequent lack of team coordination and weak cooperation among the central part of the defense led to the fact that they received 142 goals in 4 matches, which is 35.5 goals per match, with a goal difference of -40. Such results were only good enough for the last, ninth place. The Netherlands was the only one at this championship that tried to play several variants of transformation zone formations, from 6:0 to 5:1, or from 5:1, which was aggressive, to a deep 4:2. The Czech national team played the best defense in cooperation with the goalkeepers. Their 6:0 defense, which was played up to 8 meters in the five matches played in this Championship, received only 117 goals, or 23.4 goals per match. Such a defense was the backbone and foundation for winning first place in this Championship. The analysis of the results in Table 11 clearly shows that the Czech national team, with 33 stolen balls and 8 blocked shots, ranks high in 1st place in terms of the efficiency of their defense. It is followed by the Netherlands, with 39 steals and 9 blocked shots, but with one more match played. Regarding these defensive parameters, Austria and Slovakia are also in the very top at this Championship, which was ultimately reflected in the final ranking.

	Turnovers	ST-Steals	BS-Blocked Shots
AUT	7	23	8
BUL	20	15	4
CZE	6	33	8
FIN	15	19	6
GEO	20	24	7
LAT	12	15	9
NED	19	39	9
SVK	15	27	5
TUR	13	9	1

Table 9. Overall Team statistic parameters

Defense basic systems and alternatives: 6v6

The best defense at this Championship was demonstrated by the Czech national team, which played a slightly deeper version of 6:0 defense up to 9 meters. Excellent movement and positioning of the entire defense were accompanied by excellent saves of goalkeepers #1 Patrik Bartoš and #24 Daniel Grabemann, who had 36.00% of saves. With their saves, they were at the very top of the Goalkeepers' Statistics rankings. Their 6:0 defense, especially in the central part at positions three and four, caused great problems for the opposing teams. Matej Havran #14 in the position of central back and Tomasek Adam #21 were excellent in performing defensive tasks. The [video](#) shows good movement and defensive activity of all players in the 6:0 defense of the Czech national team. After a good defense, the development of the counter-attack and semi-counter-attack was well developed and coordinated, so they scored many easy goals. Due to his excellent defense, Matej Havran #14 was declared best defender.

The defense of the Austrian national team was mostly based on a 6:0 zone formation, which was played up to 8 meters. Throughout the tournament, their defense was quite good, especially in the group stage, where they received an average of 25 goals per match. In the finals, the quality of the Austrian national team came to the fore, and already in the first half, the result was 16:9 for this national team. Throughout the tournament, their central defense at the position of central defenders #8 Emil Scheicher and #15 Florian Heizinger, in cooperation with the second right and left side defender, #6 Siniša Sironjić and #23 Mario Andreas Lippitsch, respectfully, were good in anticipating the opponent's attacks. Austria particularly stood out in the group phase, where they beat the Netherlands in the key match.

The national team of the Netherlands played their classic [6:0](#) defense, which was transformed by deep interactive movements, especially of the second right side defender and the second left side defender. Such occasional transformations transformed the defense into a 5:1 and 5+1 zone, which created certain problems for teams that were slow in adapting to that zone. It is a zone formation in which the far defenders stay in their position if the backcourt attackers cut between 1st and 2nd and 5th and 6th defender in defense. Defensive tasks were performed well by #20 Brent Riksten and #7 Himestra Jelte in cooperation with #23 Jeromy Van der Ban and #14 Morris

Kippers. Excellent cooperation between defensive players and goalkeeper #12 Evan de Lange contributed to his high save percentage of 31.9%, which was enough to include him in the All-star Team as top goalkeeper.

Goalkeepers' performance

Goalkeepers

Team	Abbr.	MP	Saves	Shots	Save Eff.	7m Penalty Shots		6m	Wing	FB	9m Shots		Near Shots	
						S/S	%				S/S	%	S/S	%
Austria	AUT	6	81	241	33.6	6/32	18.8	43/121	9/33	0/1	23/54	42.6	52/154	33.8
Bulgaria	BUL	5	62	211	29.4	2/9	22.2	29/90	4/17	0/5	27/90	30.0	33/107	30.8
Czech Republic	CZE	5	63	180	35.0	1/13	7.7	40/106	5/10		17/51	33.3	45/116	38.8
Finland	FIN	5	51	206	24.8	4/22	18.2	21/115	1/15	0/1	25/53	47.2	22/130	16.9
Georgia	GEO	6	66	252	26.2	4/19	21.1	30/105	6/22	1/3	25/103	24.3	36/127	28.4
Latvia	LAT	5	57	212	26.9	4/15	26.7	24/108	5/8	1/5	23/76	30.3	29/116	25.0
Netherlands	NED	6	70	247	28.3	4/34	11.8	30/112	6/22	0/1	30/78	38.5	36/134	26.9
Slovakia	SVK	6	45	248	18.2	2/21	9.5	16/118	9/23	1/2	17/84	20.2	25/141	17.7
Turkey	TUR	4	46	188	24.5	1/12	8.3	17/88	11/30	0/1	16/56	28.6	28/118	23.7

Table 10. Total Goalkeepers' efficiency

The results in Table 10 show that the goalkeepers of the Czech national team had an average of 35% saves in each match. The goalkeeper duo #24 Grabemann Daniel and #1 Patrik Bartoš led their team to first place with superb saves. Austrian goalkeeper Jan Kroiss should be mentioned, who had a total of 36.1% of saves and particularly stood out with saves from 9 meters, with a high percentage of 42.6%. It is interesting that the goalkeepers of the Finnish national team had the highest percentage of saves from 9 meters (47.2%), whereas in Near Shots saves, this percentage was 16.9%, which is convincingly the lowest of all other national teams at the Championship. To improve the statistics, they should work on this segment in the future to achieve better results. The goalkeeper of the Dutch national team, Evan de Lange, with 31.9% of saves, was selected for the All-Star Team. With his saves, he gave an excellent rhythm to his national team, who took advantage of it in counter-attacks and semi-counter-attacks. In the 4th place in the table of the most successful goalkeepers is Latvian goalkeeper #1 Martin Ozolins with 34.5% of saves, who helped his national team to come in fifth place. It is important to highlight the role that goalkeepers play in every handball team. Their influence on the final result can be of crucial importance, which has been demonstrated in this Championship, where teams with good team defenses, in cooperation with the goalkeepers, achieved excellent results. The answer to the question "What is one of the most important factors of situational efficiency that determines the winner in a handball match?" is – the goalkeeper's save percentage. Therefore, it can be concluded that without a high percentage of goalkeeper's saves, teams can hardly achieve top results, especially when it comes to tournament-type competitions.

Goalkeeper Statistics

TOTAL SHOTS (top20)								
Rank	Name	Nr.	Nat.	Team	%	Saves	Shots	MP
1	Grabemann Daniel	24	CZE	Czech Republic	37.3	19	51	4
2	Kroiss Jan	12	AUT	Austria	36.1	57	158	6
3	Bartoš Patrik	1	CZE	Czech Republic	34.7	42	121	5
4	Ozolins Martins	1	LAT	Latvia	34.5	49	142	5
5	de Lange Evan	12	NED	Netherlands	31.9	52	163	6
6	Petrov Nikolay	16	BUL	Bulgaria	31.9	58	182	5
7	Obersler Louis	16	AUT	Austria	30.0	24	80	6
8	Alievi Nazimi	12	GEO	Georgia	29.0	31	107	5
9	Parvinen Fredrik	12	FIN	Finland	25.9	49	189	5
10	Gorgodziani Luka	1	GEO	Georgia	25.6	35	137	6
11	Mete Eren Alp	77	TUR	Turkey	25.4	15	59	4
12	Civan Ahmet Furkan	33	TUR	Turkey	24.6	31	126	4
13	Verberne Ivo	1	NED	Netherlands	22.0	18	82	6
14	Suntila Telmo	1	FIN	Finland	20.0	2	10	4
15	Bako Christopher	12	SVK	Slovakia	19.7	30	152	5
16	Reinholds Ilvars	16	LAT	Latvia	18.8	3	16	3
16	Stefanov Emiliyan	12	BUL	Bulgaria	18.8	3	16	5
18	Chmela Tomáš	12	CZE	Czech Republic	16.7	1	6	1
19	Sopka Stanislav	19	SVK	Slovakia	16.3	15	92	5
20	Putra Ritvars	82	LAT	Latvia	12.2	5	41	4

Table 11. Individual Goalkeeper statistics

TREND ANALYSIS

Goalkeeper – Evan de Lange (NED)
Left wing – Benedikt Rudischer (AUT)
Left back – Lukas Morkovsky (CZE)
Centre back – Thomas Houtepen (NED)
Line player – Simeonov Bozhidar (BUL)
Right back – Jakub Rumian (CZE)
Right wing – Franko Lastro (AUT)
Best defender – Matej Havran (CZE)
Top scorer – Nikoloz Kalandadze (GEO), 75 goals
MVP – Nikoloz Kalandadze (GEO)

Table 12. All-Star Team

The All-Star Team of the Championship, selected with the votes submitted by teams' head coaches, is presented in Table 12. Two representatives of the Czech Republic, Austria, and the Netherlands and one representative of Bulgaria found their place on that list. Special mention should be made of [#27 Nikoloz Kalandadze](#) of the Georgian national team, with a realization percentage of 66.4%, who scored 75 goals. Due to his excellent play, he was declared MVP of the Championship. Playing in the Left Back position, he was extremely dangerous and dominant, so some national teams that played against Georgia chose a 5+1 defense, strictly guarding this player. With his height of 198 cm, he has already been recognized as the future of handball and currently plays for SASP Chambery Savoie HB. The best defensive player of the tournament is #14 Matej Havran from the Czech Republic. He is an excellent defensive player who, in the 6:0 defense, plays in the position of 4th - central back. Extremely mobile for his 100 kg weight, he anticipates the game very well with timely defensive moves. Throughout the Championship, he played excellently in the center of the defense of the Czech national team, where he constantly destroyed the opponent's attacks. He is a quality defensive player that every coach would like to have on the team.

Players for the future

Czech Republic (CZE): #1 Patrik Bartoš (GK), #24 Grabemann Daniel (GK), #9 Lukas Morkovsky (LB), #32 Jakub Rumian (RB)

Austria (AUT): #12 Jan Kroiss (GK), #4 Benedikt Rudischer (LW), #10 Franko Lastro (RW)

Netherlands (NED): #12Evan de Lange (GK), #3 Thomas Houtepen (CB), #20 Brent Riksten (LB), #9 Kaj Geenen (LW)

Finland (FIN): #4 Benjamin Peitsaro (LB), #5 Fredrik von Troil (RW), #20 Viktor Gronmark (PV)

Latvia (LAT): #1 Martin Ozolins (GK), #8 Rauls Serafimovics (CB), #19 Ralfs Geislers (LB)

Slovakia (SVK): #17 Jakub Kravcak (LB), #13 Tomas Smetanka (CB), #8 Jakub Kolenic (LW), #28 Imrich Hruby (RB)

Georgija (GEO): #27 Nikoloz Kalandadze (LB), #11 Akaki Patashuri (CB), #9 Sandro Darsania (RB)

Bulgaria (BUL): #16 Nikolay Petrov (GK), #44 Bozhidar Simeonov (PV), #11 Nikolay Genov (RB)

Türkiye (TUR): #23 Kaya Daniel (LB)

SUMMARY

The M20 EHF Championship 1 2022, which took place in Varna, showed that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, handball still copes well both with all organizational problems and the quality of the competition itself. This Championship showed that some national teams came close to the best European national teams in terms of quality of play. These are primarily the national teams of the Czech Republic, Austria, and the Netherlands, who invest a lot in handball, which has already affected the work with the younger categories. The tactical maturity of these national teams in certain situations has reached the level of senior handball. The final matches demonstrated good handball, and the Czech national team deservedly won first place defeating Austria by 32:26. All national teams achieved at least one win, except the host Bulgaria and Türkiye, who ended the tournament without a single win. I will present the trends seen in this tournament.

Impressions and trends

1. The national teams of the Czech Republic, Austria, and the Netherlands have shown that they can belong among the top 16 teams in Europe.
2. Teams mostly played in different variants of 6:0 and 5:1 zone defense formation. Other zone formations were used less or not at all. Some national teams should try to apply systems of combined defenses that would be more adaptable to the composition of their team.
3. This tournament also showed that without the quality contribution of goalkeepers to their defenses, teams can hardly achieve a top result.
4. Defense proved to be a key factor in situational efficiency compared to other parts of the handball match. The national team of the Czech Republic had a total percentage of realization of 64.39%, but they made up for it with an excellent defense with many stolen and blocked balls.
5. The 6:5 play with man advantage should be improved by a few more high-quality actions because the efficiency was 55.1%, whereas in elite handball, it is over 60% in some national teams.
6. In the future, some of the players should be oriented towards polyvalence of playing in both offense and defense. Greater attention should be paid to playing at several positions, especially for backcourt players, who, after crossing, do not manage well in positions for which they are less trained.
7. Selectors and coaches in national teams and clubs should pay special attention to chronological age, biological age, and training age during player selection. In this Championship, 20.71% of players were born from 2004 onwards.
8. In some teams, players were changed in the attack and defense phase. The teams changed one to two players who were specialists for the specific phase. In my opinion, the time needed for a faster transition is wasted. And that is also something that is not good for modern handball.