



**EHF CHAMPIONSHIP  
HANDBALL**

# **EHF M18 CHAMPIONSHIP 2022 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

*08 – 14 August 2022 Riga, Latvia*

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## 1. Introduction

### *Organization*

The Men's 18 EHF Championship 2 took place from 8 to 14 August 2022. The host of the Championship was Latvia. As a host nation, Latvia itself took part in the Men's 18 EHF Championship. The matches were played in Riga. Riga is a true handball city, and has hosted the most European Championships in the past. The 'Elektrum Olympic Arena' was the hall where all 15 matches took place. This hall has a capacity for 4000 spectators. This championship was part of 1 of the 3 championships organized this summer for the Men's 18 categorie, together with Romania and Israel. The winner of each tournament will qualify to the Men's 20 EHF Euro 2024 and earn a direct spot in the Men's U19 IHF World Championship.

### *Event*

The matches were all played in Riga. 7 teams were invited to participate in this EHF Championship, as follows: Belgium, Kosovo, Latvia, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Turkey and Switzerland. The system of the competition was such that 2 groups were formed in the Preliminary Round. Group A was formed by Kosovo, Latvia, North Macedonia and Turkey. And group B by Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland. After the matches played in each group, the first two teams from each group advanced to the semifinals. The other teams played for ranking between 5th and 7th place. Overall, 15 matches were played at the EHF Championship. All the results for the group phase of the competition can be found at the following link:

<https://www.eurohandball.com/en/competitions/national-team-competitions/men/m18-ehf-championship-2022/EDv7ikF4igWGOroJCJ60PA/lat-men-s-18-ehf-championship2-2022/>

## 2. Statistics and facts

The final ranking of this tournament shows that North Macedonia, after a thrilling finale, won the gold medal. This is a big win for the country, because this give them the way to be in the process for qualifying for the IHF 2023 World Championship. Switzerland won, after losing the finale in the last 5 minutes, the silver medal. Luxembourg, another upcoming handball country, secured themselves of the bronze medal after beating home team Latvia in the bronze medal game. For Latvia, reaching the bronze medal game, is another improvement of their talent development process. Something they started with a few years ago and proved with organizing these kinds of events. The rest of the ranking can be found in table 1.








Ranking		
1	 North Macedonia	4.  Latvia
2	 Switzerland	5.  Türkiye
3	 Luxembourg	6.  Belgium
		7.  Kosovo

Table 1: Final Ranking of the M18 EHF Championship 2

The winner of this tournament, North Macedonia, also delivered the number 2 Top scorer of this event. Aleksandar Petkovski scored 38 goals in 5 games. A big contribution to the gold medal win of North Macedonia. The Top scorer of this event is from Luxembourg. A surprising name on the list, Luke Kaysen. A talented player, but the surprise is that he only played 4 matches this tournament and scored 44 goals. The 3rd place ranked player comes also from the bronze medal winner Luxembourg, and scored 30 goals, Vincent Kreiselmaier.




Top Scorers 2022	
 <b>Kaysen, Luke</b> Luxembourg	<b>44</b>
 <b>Petkovski, Aleksandar</b> North Macedonia	<b>38</b>
 <b>Kreiselmaier, Vincent</b> Luxembourg	<b>30</b>

Table 2: Top scorers of the tournament

The All-Start Team of this events is created by the four nations who also played the semifinals, and Turkey.

### **All-star Team**

Goalkeeper: David Brestovac (North Macedonia)  
Left wing: Mihael Totikj (North Macedonia)  
Left back: Valentin Wolfisberg (Switzerland)  
Centre back: Vincent Kreiselmaier (Luxembourg)  
Right back: Eyüp Arda Yildiz (Türkiye)  
Right wing: Aleksandar Petkovski (North Macedonia)  
Line player: Jevgenijs Rogonovs (Latvia)

Best defender: Mischa Romer (Switzerland)  
MVP: Tomislav Dimkovski (North Macedonia)  
Top scorer: Luke Kaysen (44 goals, Luxembourg)

Figure 3; All-Star Team

The All-star team of this event is mostly represented by the top 4 teams of this championship. Winner North Macedonia has taken possession of 4 places in this team. The best Goalkeeper, Left Wing, Right Wing and the MVP of this tournament all come from North Macedonia. Switzerland with 2 players; the best Left Back and Defender, Luxembourg with 2; the best Center back and Top scorer, and Latvia with 1 player; the best Line Player. Turkey, the only of those team who was not in the top 4 of this championship, had the best Right Back.

### **3. Team Fair Play**

Another parameter of a youth tournament is the Team Fair Play. Developing players who have respect for the opponent and the game. In this ranking, Kosovo scored the best, they had the second lowest number of 2min suspensions. Also Switzerland, one of the finalist scored good on the 2min suspensions, but received 1 direct red card, so ended up 5<sup>th</sup> in this ranking. With only 15 2min suspensions in 4 matches, they performed the best here. North Macedonia, the gold medal winner, for example ended up on the 3<sup>th</sup> in this table. Most of this because of 25 2min suspensions in 5 games, from which 1 ended up in a red card after 3 suspensions. By this, they received, by far, the most 2min suspensions.

This shows that only 5 2 min suspensions per game as average, the tournament is played in a relatively fair way.

## Team Fair Play

Rank	Team	Points		RCR	RC	RCS	2Min.	YC	MP
		Avg.	Total						
1	Kosovo	9.0	36	0	0	0	17	2	4
2	Belgium	9.8	39	0	0	0	18	3	4
3	North Macedonia	11.2	56	0	0	1	25	2	5
4	Luxembourg	11.3	45	0	0	0	21	3	4
5	Switzerland	12.0	48	0	1	0	15	3	4
6	Türkiye	13.3	53	0	0	2	22	1	4
7	Latvia	13.8	69	0	1	1	23	4	5

Total Points = (Direct Red Card) x 15 + (Red Card after 3rd Suspension) x 4 + (2Min) x 2 + (YC) x 1 / MP

Table 4; Team Fair Play

## 4. Analyses

### a. Attack

#### Statistics

During this tournament, all teams together scored 731 goals in 15 matches. This is an average of 48.73 goals per match

If we watch the individual teams, the ranking is as follows:

Ranking average goals per game	
North Macedonia	32,4
Switzerland	32,3
Turkey	29
Latvia	28,7
Luxembourg	27,7
Belgium	23,3
Kosovo	18,66

Table 5; Average goals per game

As we can see in table 5, North Macedonia, the gold medalist was with 32,4 goals per match the most successful team in attack this championship. The runner up of this tournament, Switzerland, scored average more or less equal with 32,3 goals per game.

In table 6 we can see that top scoring teams of this tournament, and the finalists, also were the most efficient teams in scoring goals from shots on target. North Macedonia, number 1 in ranking of average scored goals per game, and Switzerland, number 2 in the ranking of average scored goals per game switched positions. An exception in both rankings is Luxembourg. The number 3 of this tournament was not one of the top teams in both rankings, so their strength was not based on their attack. North Macedonia was the team with the most shots this tournament, but also the only country who played 5 matches. But also in average they had the most shots.

Top teams in efficiency of shots scored	
Switzerland	66.2%
North Macedonia	60.2%
Turkey	57.4%
Latvia	55.3%
Luxembourg	52.5%
Belgium	44.3%
Kosovo	40.6%

Table 6; Shot efficiency per team

#### Top 4 teams of the Championship

If we focus more on the top 4 teams of this tournament, we see that the matches between those teams were not very close in the semifinals and 3rd place match. Only the finale was very exciting in this way. So we can say there was a clear level difference between number 1 and 2, and the rest of the teams. And maybe also between 3 and the rest of the teams, but the 3rd place match was close until the last 10 minutes

Semi final 1	North Macedonia – Luxembourg	32-22
Semi final 2	Switzerland - Latvia	40-22
Final	North Macedonia – Switzerland	24-22
3-4 place match	Luxembourg - Latvia	33-24

Table 7; Medal games

If we look where this teams created their changes and scored their goals, the following table (figure 8) gives us more insight.

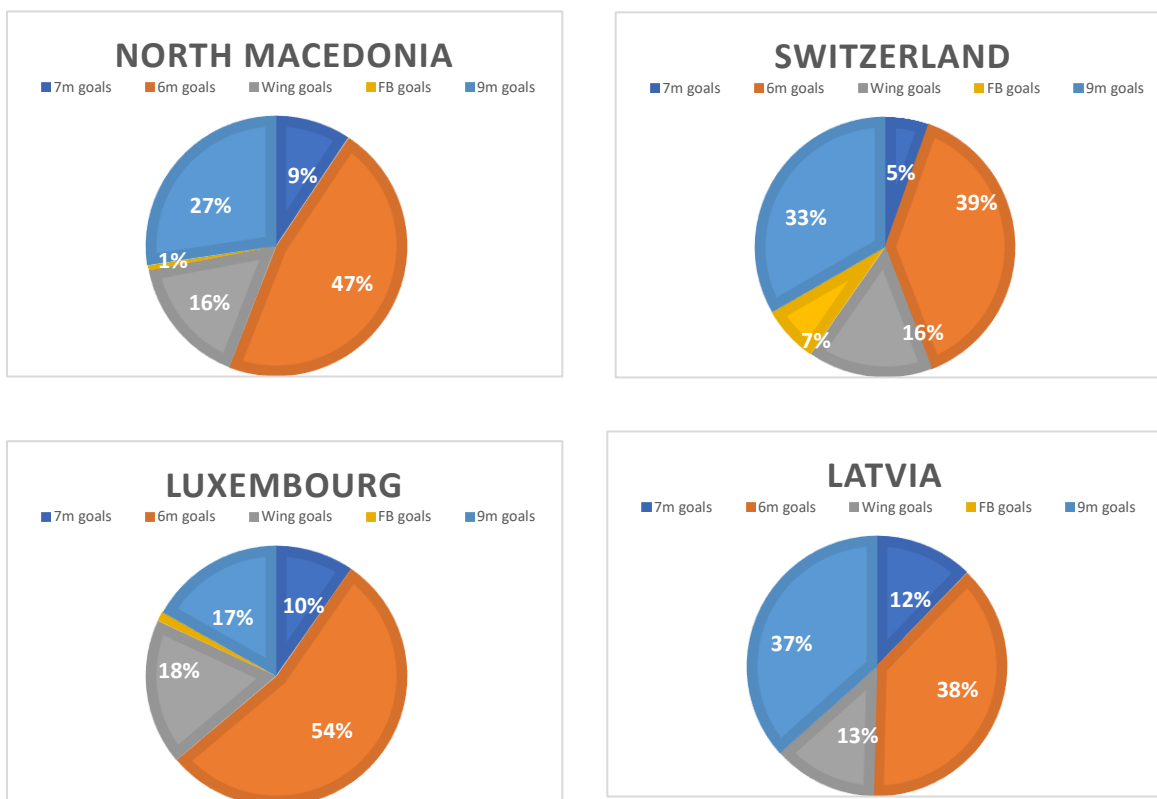


Figure 8; scoring position per team

All the top 4 teams of this tournament scored the most of their goals from 6-meter shots. But North Macedonia, the winner of this tournament, had the best variation in scoring positions.

If we focus more on the attack, the 9-meter shots of Switzerland is something we need to discuss. Because Switzerland was with the 2nd highest number of 9-meter shot goals(43 in total) the most successful of the 4 top teams. If we compare this with North Macedonia, who played 1 match more, who had 44 goals from 9-meter shots. Switzerland created by far the most fast break shots and goals of the tournament. But their way of playing this is logical. They have a good contra run and are very focused on scoring fast goals.

The 7-meter efficiency of this tournament is interesting. A percentage of 75% would be considered as successful in top level national teams, but only North Macedonia and surprisingly Belgium is on this level, as we can see in table 9.

	7-meter efficiency
North Macedonia	83.3%
Belgium	75.0%
Luxembourg	72.7%
Latvia	68.2%
Turkey	63.6%
Switzerland	58.3%
Kosovo	55.6%

Table 9; 7-meter efficiency

### *Organized attacks*

In organized attacks, mainly all the teams played structural attacks with position changes, as we know from modern senior handball. The patterns they use are common. Most of the teams, especially the top teams of this tournament, were very strict in playing with this kind of structures. Now we will show some of these positional changes, and their most used strategies. What was obvious, is that most of the times these structures were played from the left side of the attack. Turkey was special, if we compare them to the other teams, because they did a lot of crosses in most of their systems.

#### 1. Line player-cross

*Step 1 – line players runs around the center back, gets the ball, and passes to the right back*



*Step 2 – the line player takes position and the right back opens to the ‘new center back’*



### *Solutions:*

My observation is that most of the times, this structure is played for the following solutions;

- First of all, isolation of the center defenders, to get a clear 1 against 1 situation for the back player. This player made their decision of what the defender chooses to do. Did they stay down, the back player took a direct shot from 9-meter. Did the defender come up, the back player made a 1 against 1 actions.
- Second option was an extra pass to the left or right back. Depending on where the line player was, those players had a 1 against 1 or 2 against 2 situation with the line player, they most of the time took.
- Sometimes the back player who ended up in a 1-1 situation, gave a direct pass to the wing player.
- Some teams added some extra crosses (like Turkey liked to do), a direct action without playing the full steps of this structure or a wing to the line transition.

Something very special in this system was the way of playing of North Macedonia, who had a clear cooperation between the back players and the line player in all their variations. This, we can say, is something we normally see in more mature teams. But with the right timing in running away or setting a block, they created a big 1 against 1 for the back players most of the times, or a good 2 against 1 situation with the line player block.

## 2. Back-cross without ball

*Step 1 – the center back and left back changes positions while the ball is in the air to the right back*



*Step 2 – the end situation – this is the most created end situation where the solutions started.*

### *Solutions:*

My observation is that most of the times, this structure is played to create an decision fault of the two center defenders and isolating the number 2 and 5 defenders. What we see in this structure was;

- Direct shots from the back players – teams use the back-cross without ball for bringing a shooter in the right position, in the center of the field
- This structure is used a lot to add extra crosses with the back players after the back-cross without ball, and so, bringing another back in position to shoot through the center of the defense. Or with 1 extra pass creating a 1 against 1 on the number 2 and 5 defender

### 3. Wing player transition to the line

*Step 1: Line player takes position around the 2nd defender, the wing runs in*



*Step 2; the wing takes position, the center back gets the attention of both center defenders*

#### *Solutions:*

My observation is that most of the times, this structure is played for the following solutions.

- Attracting the attention of a third and fourth defender to create a numerical superiority on the other side
- A 3 against 2 situations for the back player with the wing who is on the line now and the other wing.
- A direct 1 against one situation for the center back against the center defender
- Putting the pressure on the wing defenders. One solution was creating space in the second phase of this attack on the outside of the field, where the wing player left his position. The other was where the wing run all the way to the other side of the field, between the last defenders, in which situation that wing defender had to make decisions in positions and timing.

#### b. Defense

Team	Formation of organized defense
Belgium	6-0 classic on 8 meter) and sometimes more active and mobile on 9 m 4+2 on the best opponent players 5-1/3-2-1 defense
Turkey	6-0 classic on 8-meter compact
Switzerland	6-0 classic on 8 meter, aggressive
Latvia	6-0 classic on 8 meter 5+1 defense on the best opponent player
North Macedonia	6-0 with initiative on stealing the ball 5-1 and 3-2-1
Luxembourg	6-0 classic on 8-meter with pressing 5-1
Kosovo	6-0 classic

Table 10; Formation of organized defense per team

Tactical defense formations were mostly determined by the most common systems set in modern international top handball. The coaches mostly chose 6-0 and 5-1 defense, with their own modifications. The classic 6:0 defense was used by all teams at this Championship, as either a primary or secondary defense option. The option for solving the situation of cutting this zone formation was a transformation to a 5-1 defense. Other defense systems of deep defense were also used, but only in cases several minutes before the end of the match,

when the team that was in score deficit would try to compensate by pressing or 3-2-1 defense.

We need to point out North Macedonia. The most dynamic team in organized defense structures, switches a lot between 6-0, 5-1 and sometimes 3-2-1 defense. In numerical superiority they defend sometimes 5+1 on the best opponent attacker. With these switches, they disturb the attack of the opponent a lot and this we could see in some 2 or 3 goals run after a change, and Time-outs called in by the opponent. We saw this back in the last part of the final against Switzerland. Good to mention is that we already saw this with the U20 team also. So, this is the country's vision of their way of defending.

The defense of Switzerland looked the most dynamic and mobile of all, especially in turning from defense to contra-attack with the team. The cooperation with the goalkeeper looked well, as we will discuss in paragraph d. They looked to have a consistent defending team with the defense and goalkeepers. This is something we also saw with the U20 team and resulted again in a lot of fast counter and fast break goals.

Interesting is the defense structure of Belgium. They start the matches with a strict 6-0 defense, but in all the matches they came behind, they tried a lot of formations. For example, in their match against Turkey they tried a 4+2 defense on the Left and Right Back of Turkey, their most productive players. But this doesn't work out well, so they switched to a 5-1 defense to disturb the tempo and pressure on the defense of the center back. Against Kosovo, they tried a 3-2-1 and 5-1 combined defense when they faced a 6 goals disadvantage. And this worked out well, because in this period, they disturbed the attack of Kosovo which led to the comeback and turn in the game. Eventually Belgium won this game with 5 goals advantage.

### c. Numerical Superiority

Most of the teams in this competition used some easy but effective ways to play numerical superiority in attack. Going to 2 line players, in different variations, and playing around the line player block are the most used. We will point the 2 most used tactics out in some pictures.

This is something we see a lot in modern handball and saw in the Men's U20 Championship. The same countries use the same type of playing their Numerical Superiority

#### 1. Back player goes to line around the second defender



In the first step, the left back opens the field, goes into the 9-meter and plays the ball to the center back. The left back stays on the line between the first and second defender, the line player is between the third and fourth defender. From this, the center back takes some decisions, after catching the third defenders attention;

- a. Pass the direct ball to the left wing or right wing
- b. Pass to one of the two line players
- c. Pass the ball to the right back, the line players blocks the third defender. Now the right back have a 3 against 2 situation.

This structure is the main 6 against 5 structure of Switzerland, Luxembourg and North Macedonia, also other teams also used this sometimes.

## 2. Playing around the line player block

In all different ways, teams play around the line player block. With only opening the field by a back player, after a change of position of the backs without ball, but also with ball. All with the same end situation. For our example we use the change of position without ball;



In this structure, the situation effectively starts when the line player, who is between the third and fourth defender, puts a block on the third defender. From this, the (new) center back makes some decisions;

- a. Go for the direct breakthrough when the fourth defender doesn't come
- b. A direct pass to the right wing
- c. Go for the contra pass to the left wing, or left back who has a 1-1 situation
- d. Pass the ball to the right back, who has a 2 against 1 situation with the wing player.

This idea of the structure is the main 6 against 5 structure of Turkey, Kosovo, and Belgium

In this chapter, when we discuss the numerical superiority of teams, we need to highlight Turkey. They played a lot of variations of the line player position and crosses in it.

In numerical disadvantage, most of the teams works with a wing who runs in, and go back in the end of the system. The reason is to keep the defenders down and create a good 1 against 1.

Step 1: the wing takes position on the line



step 2: they system is played as normal



Step 3: The wing runs back and creates a 1 vs 1 for the left back, with a defender who is down



#### d. Goalkeeper Performance

Team	% of save efficiency	Number of saves
North Macedonia	43.0%	77
Switzerland	38.4%	56
Turkey	34.1%	60
Luxembourg	30.7%	38
Latvia	25.6%	43
Belgium	23.6%	34
Kosovo	22.2%	30

Table 10; Goal keeper performance per team

#### Statistics

Table 10 shows the overall goalkeepers' save percentage and the total number of saves. North Macedonia, Switzerland, and Turkey hold the first three places. Looking at these percentages, you could say in general that this ultimately affected their final ranking in the tournament. Only Turkey, compared to the other 2, who were semifinalists, is a difference. Turkey had not reached that this tournament.

The last two places belong to Belgium and Kosovo, whose goalkeepers had under 25% of saves, an important benchmark to have the chance of winning matches. North Macedonia, the best scoring country in this list, and the gold medal winner, only received 177 shots in 5 matches to their goalkeeper. But also, their goalkeepers had some tremendous efficiency, with nearly 5% more save then number two. This is one of the big contributions to their tournament win.

### *Top 3 teams of the Championship*

If we look closer to the best 3 teams of the competition, we see the following goalkeeper statistics per zone;

Team	# of s/s on near shots	# of s/s on 9m shots
North Macedonia	37.5%	62.0%
Switzerland	28.3%	46.9%
Luxembourg	25.6%	53.9%

Table 11; goalkeeper performance per zone of the top 3 teams.

Looking to these statistics, we see that the conclusion that North Macedonia did a good job in defense this tournament is supported by these facts. They only received 42 goals from near shots and only 31 from 9-meter shots. Their goalkeepers had some perfect statistics on this comparing to Switzerland and Luxembourg. Especially on the 9 meter statistics is a huge difference with the numbers 2 and 3 of this tournament. In this classification, North Macedonia is clearly the best ranked team in what kind of statistic so ever, an expected conclusion for the gold medalist of the championship.

### *Individual goalkeepers*

During this tournament, some of the individual goalkeepers did a good job. Because the main goal of a youth tournament is to develop individual talents for the future, it is good to discuss them. In this ranking, we only watch to goalkeepers who have played in 3 or more matches this championship.

Ivan Galevski, the second goalkeeper of North Macedonia did a good job. He played in 5 matches he had 28 stops of 55 shots, a tremendous percentage of 50.9%. With this, he had a great contribution to the wins of North Macedonia. And his partner, and first goalkeeper, David Brestovac ended up third on the best goalkeepers statistics with a 40.5% save rate. He had 49 saves in total, the most of the tournament.

In between these two, number 2 on the list is a goalkeeper of the other finalist Switzerland; Ramon Kusnandar with 40.9% and on number 4 his colleague Mathieu Seravalli with 37.0%.

A special thing to mention is that first goalkeeper of North Macedonia, David Brestovac also played the Men's U20 Championship 2 in Bulgaria, and ended up their as the number 5 in the best goalkeeper ranking looking to percentages. To do this 2 times in one summer is special.

Ranking	Name	Country	% stops	Saves/shots
1	Ivan Galevski	Great Britain	38.6 %	17/44
2	Ramon Kusnandar	Switzerland	36.3%	37/102
3	David Brestovac	Luxembourg	33.9%	21/62
4	Mathieu Seravalli	Switzerland	33.6%	36/107
5	Arda Köse	North Macedonia	33.0%	38/115

Table 12; top 5 goalkeepers

## 5. Players to watch

During this tournament, some of the players showed that they have the potentials to act on a higher level. These are interesting players to follow further in their development. Some of them, of course, reached the All-Star Team, but others are also very interesting. We pointed out some potential stars per country:

North Macedonia: Dimkovski (RB), Petkovski(RW), Kalajdjevsku(CB). Brestovac(GK), Totikj(LW)

Switzerland: Wolfisberg(CB), Steenaerts(RW), Wanner(LB), Kusnandar(GK), Romer(Def)

Luxembourg: Goergen(CB), Kreiselmaier(CB), Kaysen(LB)

Latvia: Bors(RW), Elferts(CB), Rogonovs(LP)

Kosovo: Mulay(LB)

Belgium: Maes(RW), Kieffer-Heuls(LW)

Turkey: Köse(GK), Yildiz(RB), Gedikli(LP)

## 6. Trend Analysis and Summary

After this tournament I think we can conclude that we saw a good level of handball with some teams who put a lot of effort in talent development. The best teams played the final this tournament, but all teams played modern and positive handball. North Macedonia was the most stable team in this tournament, with only no loss, and was physically fit. They played 1 match more than their opponent in the final. They had a lot of variation in their defense, a good deviation in tempo changes in the match and they played calm and structured in attack with cooperation between backs and the line player. And, maybe the most important thing for this tournament, they were mentally strong in the last part of the final, where they were down with 2 goals and 10 minutes to play.

The gold medal match of this tournament was a real thriller. The first half both teams were equal all and at the end of the first half North Macedonia took a short 3 goal sprint to 13-10. Directly after halftime, Switzerland changed the face of the game and came back to 14-14. From that point, the game stayed very tight until the end. Switzerland, with their fast way of playing, took the lead after 50 minutes; 20-22. But from that point, North Macedonia switched again their defense structure, to a 5-1 defense, and prevented Switzerland from scoring goals for the rest of the match. 2 goals from Right Back Dimkovski took North Macedonia back in the lead. And a goal in the last minute from the line secured the win.

Also, the bronze medal match was a close match with a lot of fighting spirit, up to 45 minutes. Both teams had a very good start, with a lot of goals. In the 15<sup>th</sup> minute, Latvia received a clear red card, but stayed mentally strong. They came behind after 3 goals of Luxembourg (10-7), but managed to stay calm and pick up their way of playing from the first 15 minutes. This ended up in a 14-14 score in half-time. In this first half, Center Back Kaysen of Luxembourg showed his tremendous goalscoring skills with a lot of goals. In total he scored this match 18(!) goals from contra attack, shooting, 1-1 actions and 7m shots.

Because of a good first 30 minutes, Latvia decided to put a 5+1 defense with full focus on Kaysen. The first part of the second half this worked, and both teams stayed close; 19-17 after 40 minutes. But Latvia got more and more problems with scoring their goals, and gave away a lot of 7m throws, a certainty for a player like Kaysen. After 50 minutes the score was 26-22 and from that point Luxembourg stayed calm, scored their goals and prevented to make mistakes. Latvia couldn't keep their goalscoring pace from the first half, so the match ended up in a 33-24 win, and the bronze medal, for Luxembourg.

A tournament with some countries who were surprising, like Latvia and Luxembourg in their attack. But also some players who were surprising, like both wings of Belgium, the right back of Turkey and all goalkeepers of the finalists.

Most of the teams were very strict in their defensive structures. But North Macedonia was an exception. They switched a lot in their defense structure. Especially in special moments with numerical superiority, but also because of tactical reasons.

Some impressions and trends during the tournament;

1. Teams mostly played in different variations of 6:0 and 5:1 zone defense formation. Other zone formations were used less, or only by 1 or 2 teams sometimes.
2. The total number of scored goals was 731 goals in 15 matches, and we saw a match with 65 goals scored.
3. This tournament showed that player versatility and quality of players who enter from the bench are necessary for winning this tournament. Especially because of the difference in total number of matches played during this tournament and the equalness in level of both finalists.
4. Goalkeepers were a key factor in the matches. What was noticeable in the top 2 national teams is that the advantage usually did not depend on one goalkeeper but the tandem of both goalkeepers.
5. In this tournament, most of the teams used the standard structures for numerical superiority, but also in normal attack. This is something we also saw in the Men's 20 Championships. Belgium was one of the only teams this summer that in numerical disadvantage stayed with only 5 attackers.
6. Also, in attack with a numerical disadvantage, almost all teams have a structure where wing players run in, create some traffic for the defense, and run back to position, in which one of the attacking players have extra time to substitute with the goalkeeper. This is something they learned from the top senior teams in the world

We can draw a clear conclusion. All the teams showed their best performances with modern and nice to watch Handball, and the Latvia Handball Federation managed to organize a very good tournament for all the stakeholders.