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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETITIVE EXERCISES IN
IMPROVING THE DEFENSIVE TECHNICAL ACTIONS OF SKILLED HANDBALL
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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: competitive exercises;
defensive actions; defensive structures;
handball.**Received:** 10.11.25**Accepted:** 11.11.25**Published:** 13.12.25**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to develop competitive exercises for enhancing crucial skills in the handball defense system and to determine the impact of these exercises on improving skills within the applied defense system. As a sample for the study, 10 skilled handball players from the Uzbek state university of physical education and sport - "USUPES" team have been selected. A set of competitive exercises was prepared to improve individual and group defensive actions in the defense system, with successful and unsuccessful attempts in pre- and post-tests being evaluated. The researcher utilized the "TomaSoft" statistical software for data analysis and calculation of various parameters. The study results revealed that the competitive exercises had a significant impact on improving defensive actions through the interdependence of handball players during gameplay.

Introduction. Handball spread and developed rapidly throughout the world and Asian countries. This was the result of rapid changes in the game's performance, whether individual or team [1, 3]. For movements to be balanced and interconnected, the player must possess skillful abilities. This allows them to perform any defensive task, regardless of its type, in the chosen tactical position. Thus, competitive handball activity requires the player to overcome

the opponent in all situations using specific defensive skills of the game. Therefore, movement can be considered the language of communication in the field of sports [4]. Thus, each movement encompasses sports mastery, which includes defensive skills that enhance a portion of general and specialized skills. These skills often manifest as an overall dynamic, executed in a precise and purposeful sequence. The main objective is to counter the opponent's offensive actions. When performing an action, each player must consider the most crucial fundamental elements such as movement, space, and time. This necessitates the occurrence of a series of sequential motion operations that may lead to the interdependence of various types of actions. Since we have observed that defensive effectiveness has a greater impact on determining victory over an opponent in a game, and because offensive actions are aimed at scoring goals, a team with excellent defensive movements can prevent goals from being scored on their own net. This, in turn, increases the team's motivation to score during attacks on the opponent's goal. Consequently, teaching and learning defensive skills requires more physical and mental effort compared to skill training sessions [2].

The significance of this research lies in utilizing competitive exercises to enhance the most crucial defensive actions within the defensive structure employed in handball. Regarding the research problem, through the researcher's experience as both a player and currently as a coach, a weakness has been observed in the application of certain defensive skills, particularly in preventing the opponent from scoring goals and disrupting their movements within the defensive lines, especially in the central positions [2, 3] of the midfield. This led the researcher to associate this vulnerability with individual actions within the group, as these actions are not performed in harmony with the group. Consequently, the researcher endeavored to find some solutions to this problem.

The aim of this research is to develop competitive exercises for enhancing certain crucial skills in handball's defensive formation and to determine the impact of these exercises on improving defensive skills in the applied formation. It is hypothesized that competitive exercises will have a significant effect on refining these important skills within the defensive structure.

Methods. Before starting our research, we developed a program of special exercises based on the analysis of the defensive actions of 10 qualified handball players of the “Uzbek state university of physical education and sport” team, selected as a research group, during the competition period, and used these exercises during the team's pre-competition preparation period. First, we studied the results of the analysis and conducted the first test. The final

analysis of the effectiveness of defensive actions of the handball players of the research group was conducted at the Sports competition “Universiada” held in December 2024.

Table 1

Stages of the experimental project implementation

Group	First step	Second step	Third step	Fourth step
10 players of the “USUPES” team	Initial test	Training using competitive exercises	Final test	Difference between initial and final tests and final conclusion

Instruments and materials

The instruments used in the study consisted of personal interviews, questionnaires, tests, and measurement criteria. The materials used included: a handball court, 10 official handballs, an ARTEL television screen, an “Epson” video camera for game recording, colored pencils and paper, a HP laptop calculator, 20 signs of varying heights, a whistle, and a stopwatch.

Conducting the research

The researcher used a pre-prepared questionnaire to identify the most important defensive skills in the defensive system used in handball. This questionnaire covers skills such as facing the attacker in the defensive system (5-1), guarding the defender, receiving and passing the ball. The questionnaire was encoded and approved after interviewing a group of experts and specialists, collecting their opinions. After assessing the possibilities of using the questionnaire, the jury's conclusions were approved.

First test:

To determine how well the questionnaire corresponded with the study participants, the researcher utilized the questionnaire during a match between the “Toshkent” club and their opponents on October 2, 2024, at the Handball Hall in Tashkent city.

Second test:

Under the supervision of the researcher, the auxiliary working group conducted the second experiment on October 17, 2024, at 17:00 at the Universal Sports Complex in Chirchik city, at the training center of the “USUPES” team. This was aimed at determining the suitability and level of complexity of the exercises selected for the research sample. Nine players of the “USUPES” team participated in the experiment. It was intended to identify potential difficulties. The researcher observed the following:

- 1) The appropriateness of the training unit structure for performing exercises.
- 2) The suitability of the prepared exercises.

Complex of prepared exercises:

A set of individual and group competitive exercises focusing on specific defensive skills within the framework of defensive tactics has also been prepared. These exercises are designed to identify successful and unsuccessful attempts in both previous and subsequent trials. These exercises are utilized during the pre-competition period. In this context, the results of the experimental work conducted by the researcher, available resources, and the level of preparation of the sample group were taken into account. The researcher concentrated on exercises aimed at developing the defensive skills of individual players within the group. These exercises were implemented in the experimental group on November 7, 2024. The training sessions were conducted under the direct supervision of the researcher, while the exercises were administered by members of the auxiliary working group.

I. Exercises are employed during the pre-competition period. The number of training units has been increased to 12. Three units are utilized throughout the week (on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays). The total volume of exercises during each training unit comprises 30-35 minutes of the main section. The intensity of training applied in these units ranges from 85-100%. The researcher relied on the method of repetitive practice for the exercises;

II. Exercise Description;

III. Each defensive player stands in the 2nd position on both sides, while the other attacking players are distributed to the middle, right, and left of the arm. They hold onto one arm until the final attack on the defender, then the defender must continuously face the attackers while moving backwards;

IV. Two players stand: one at the front center position, the other at the back center. The attacker is a midfielder (game controller) who stands inside a circle to define the attacking area and the free movement zone;

V. 3 players are positioned: 2 on the sides, and 3 at the back center of the middle section. The field is limited only by the markings in the middle part. When the whistle blows, 3 players attack against 3 players from the center of the field;

VI. Three defenders stand in the central defense: two on the flanks in the 3rd position, and one in the central defense. The attacking group consists of 3 back-line players and 4 circle players. The attack begins with a whistle from the center of the field;

VII. 3 defenders stand in the 2nd position on both sides, 1 player is positioned in the back center. There are 5 attackers, of which 2 are circle players and 3 are standing on the back line. The attack begins with a whistle from the center of the field;

VIII. In defense, 4 players are distributed in front central positions: back center and central wings, with 2 players on each side. In attack, there are 4 players: 1 circle player and 3 from the back line. The attack begins with a whistle from the center of the field;

IX. The defender stands in the 2nd position on both sides and moves within a range of 6-9 meters. The attackers are positioned in the middle of the court;

X. The ball is rotated from right to left, while the coach stands in the center of the area, controlling the game. When the defender moves towards the attacker, the circle player in position 2 should quickly close in to intercept the ball that will be passed to the circle player by the coach;

XI. There is one defender for each position in the midfield, two players on each side, and forwards in the right and left wing positions. Forwards attack, while the defenders' task is to confront the attackers and stop their movement. Then the exercise is repeated for the 3rd position;

XII. 4 defenders stand, 2 players from each side are positioned at the edge of the field, and each player stands at a corner. The ball is placed in the center of the area. When the whistle blows, two groups of players run to the center. Whoever gets the ball becomes the attacker, and the other becomes the defender;

XIII. Each of the 4 players begins by running from a 6-meter area to a 9-meter area while passing the ball to each other. They pass the ball to the right corner player with their left hand, then pass from left to right arms. Then they transition to a defensive position, and 2 players attack against 2 players;

XIV. Two players are positioned at the 6-meter line, one player stands in the middle of the court, and one player runs from the 6-meter line to the middle of the court, at which point the goalkeeper stops them. The player in the middle of the court runs to the second 9-meter area and takes a defensive position. The attack becomes one-on-one;

XV. The team is divided into two groups, with 6 players in each group, 3 of whom stand on one side of the court. The second team is divided in the same way. Thus, in each half of the court, there are 6 players: 3 attackers and 3 defenders. When a player scores a goal, they receive the ball back and pass it to their group members in the other half of the court. This movement continues uninterrupted;

XVI. The team is divided into 3 groups (A-B-C). Group A is positioned in a 9-meter area on one side of the court, while Group B is in a 9-meter area on the other side. Group C initiates an attack on one of the two groups. If a goal is scored, the attacking team retains possession. If no goal is scored, the attackers become defenders, and the defenders become attackers.

Results of statistical analysis and discussion. The results are presented in tables 3, 4, and 5. These three tables show that the applied competitive exercises significantly ($p < 0.05$) improved the defensive skills of young handball players. Improved defensive skills include: the ability to counter-attack the attacker (table 3), the ability to cover (table 4), and the ability to receive and pass the ball (table 5).

Preliminary and final results of the attack-resistant defense system 5-1

Table 2

No.	Test period (1 or 2)	Number of successful attempts	Number of failed attempts	Total number of attempts	Percentage %
1.	Initial	7	8	15	46.66
2.	Final	20	6	26	76.92

Pre-test and post-test results of coverage skills in the 5-1 formation of the defensive system

Table 3

No.	Test period (1 or 2)	Number of successful attempts	Number of failed attempts	Total number of attempts	Percentage %
1.	Initial	8	10	18	44.44
2.	Final	25	5	30	83.33

Results of initial and post-testing of receiving and passing skills in the 5-1 protection system

Table 4

No.	Test period (1 or 2)	Number of successful attempts	Number of failed attempts	Total number of attempts	Percentage %
1.	Initial	5	9	14	35.71
2.	Final	19	3	22	86.36

The researcher attributes the successful increase in the number of attempts within the specified framework of certain defensive skills (countering the attacker, maintaining a ready stance, passing and receiving the ball) to skillfully designed competitive exercises. These exercises incorporated defensive tasks, initially tailored for individual players, then progressing to interconnected drills between prepared units, and finally evolving into group and team exercises across most units. The researcher emphasized that during these drills, the defender initiates the attack first and aims to halt the attacker's movement at the very first step.

In other words, during execution, the defender performs both offensive and defensive roles through excitement, intensity, and interdependence.

Repetitions in exercises increase players' response speed and develop their reactions, which improves their ability to act at the right moment. For a defender, it is crucial to take the initiative against the attacker first, and this characteristic distinguishes a good defender from others. This, in turn, influences whether the performance will be successful or unsuccessful.

This method takes control of the attacker and prevents them from entering with or without the ball. To achieve this, the defender can place one hand on the hand holding the ball, and the other on the middle of the waist. Thus, the striker is pushed into a place or area that is not suitable for scoring goals. In addition, the coordinated actions of the players during the exercises helped to accurately determine the distance from one player to another. This was achieved through correct positioning and timing when receiving and countering the attacker. The coordinated actions between the partners, standing close to the first defender, in the process of passing the ball to the defender, serve to bring the opponent under control, regardless of whether he is with or without the ball.

Therefore, the researcher emphasizes that the defensive task should be executed at high speed against the attacker. This allows the defender to act first to stop the attacker's movements or prevent them from deciding to feint or shoot. This typically occurs in the 9-meter area during an attack for a back-line player. Consequently, a defender must consider several aspects in their actions, including choosing the right timing, maintaining concentration, and accurately predicting the type of shot or pass.

Conclusion. After conducting statistical studies and analyzing the results, the researcher identified significant differences between the pre- and post-tests, with the post-test results showing superiority. This demonstrated that competitive exercises play a crucial role in improving defensive handball skills and fostering interdependence in the development of players' game performance and abilities. Therefore, the researcher recommends paying special attention to developing defensive skills, particularly focusing on countering attackers and enhancing cooperation between players in the half-back position. Furthermore, it is advisable to incorporate specific competitive exercises tailored to each defensive system, selected by the coach and aligned with the players' capabilities.

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