



W17 EHF EURO (Montenegro)
YAC Qualitative Analysis



W17 EHF EURO

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INTRODUCTION

The W17 EHF EURO 2025 Montenegro qualitative summary provides an analysis of the performance of the 24 participating teams and their respective players, who competed at the tournament from July 30 to August 10 2025.

This report combines EHF statistics with video analysis, highlighting tactical aspects, attack/ defence systems, transition play and individual performances.

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TOURNAMENT – FACTS & FIGURES

- 24 teams competed in the W17 EHF EURO in six groups of four teams
- the two best-ranked teams in each preliminary round group qualified for the main round
- the top two teams plus the two best third-ranked teams advanced to the quarter-finals
- 96 matches were played in three venues in Podgorica, Montenegro, over 12 days
- 5,399 goals were scored in 96 games, making an average of 56.2 goals per game
- Gazel Dikme (Türkiye) was the top goalscorer with 75 goals

TEAM PERFORMANCE — OVERVIEW



- the final was the first-ever women's handball final for both Slovakia and Croatia
- Slovakia won their first-ever gold medal in a women's competition
- Switzerland, Hungary, France and Croatia finished the preliminary round with a perfect record of three wins, and carried two points into the main round
- Croatia had the strongest attack in the preliminary round with 105 goals
- Germany had the best defensive record, conceding only 64 goals
- France advanced to the quarter-finals as one of the best third-ranked teams, despite two losses and a draw in the main round
- Spain, Croatia, Slovakia, and Montenegro played the semi-finals

Team	Rank	Games	W	D	L	Average score		Average goal diff.
Slovakia	1	8	6	1	1	28.1	24.8	+3,3
Croatia	2	8	6	0	2	30.6	27.6	+3
Montenegro	3	8	6	0	2	28.5	24.9	+3,6
Spain	4	8	4	1	3	27.5	25.5	+2

MATCHES & PLAYERS — FACTS

- the age category for the tournament was 2008/2009
- several countries have introduced younger players into their teams
- the top three scorers were Gazel Dikme (Türkiye) with 75 goals, Alteja Ustilaite (Lithuania) with 70 goals and Jagoda Tobolewska (Poland) with 67 goals

COACHES

- there was one foreign head coach at the EURO — Germany head coach Gino Smits, who is from the Netherlands
- there were a distribution of 54.2 per cent male and 45.8 per cent female head coaches

DEFENCE GENERAL ASPECTS

- teams at the W17 EHF EURO 2025 in Montenegro used a variety of defensive formations
- the dominating system was a 6:0 formation; in exceptional cases systems change from a defensive system to 5:1 (Lithuania, Türkiye)
- by using an aggressive and highly flexible 3:2:1 defence, Spain, Croatia, and Hungary were able to trouble other teams throughout the matches
- some teams switched to a 3-3 defence when they were trailing by a lot of goals or had superiority (Hungary, Lithuania). Other teams even switched to one-on-one defence completely
- Germany (44) and Poland (39) had the most steals in the tournament

Team	Rank	Goals conceded	Goals conceded per 50 defences
Slovakia	1	198	21,8
Croatia	2	221	22,1
Montenegro	3	199	19,2
Spain	4	204	21,8

DEFENCE TACTICAL ASPECTS

- Most of the teams used a 6:0 zone defence:
 - aggressive defending back players well
 - more offensive role centre block
 - anticipatory play of the wing defenders resulted in effective steals

- 3:2:1 defence by Spain, Croatia, and Hungary:
 - shifting towards ball side during passes, wing transitions, or backcourt movements.
 - front defender active and quick on their feet

DEFENCE TOGETHER WITH GOALKEEPER

- The list of goalkeepers by save efficiency was headed by Helena Djokic (Serbia), who made 53 saves from 132 shots over eight matches, achieving an efficiency of 40.2 per cent. Close behind was All-star goalkeeper Masa Dubljevic (Montenegro), who made the highest number of saves (95) with 37.9 per cent efficiency (95 saves from 251 shots in eight matches). While Ivana Knezevic (Montenegro) technically topped the list with 50 per cent efficiency (two saves from four shots in two matches), this figure should be interpreted cautiously due to her very low number of actions.

ATTACK GENERAL ASPECTS

- At the W17 EHF EURO 2025 Montenegro, 5,399 goals were scored from 9,380 shots (57.56 per cent):
 - Switzerland (66.8 per cent), Spain (63.4 per cent) and Slovakia (62.5 per cent) were the top three in terms of shot efficiency
 - Switzerland had the best attack with 33.4 goals scored per 50 possessions
 - Top scorer Gazel Dikme (Türkiye) scored 66 goals out of 97 shots (68 per cent) in eight matches

ATTACK TECHNICAL ASPECTS

- In terms of individual techniques, the strong passing skills were particularly noteworthy:
 - Martina Knezevic (Montenegro), Mária Bartková (Slovakia), and Antea Jerkovic (Croatia) deserve special mention
 - Knezevic, who was voted the tournament's MVP not without reason, stood out for her excellent pace control and field awareness (overview). Crucially, she did not sacrifice her own goal-scoring ability and was able to create goals through strong individual actions, particularly shots and feints

ATTACK TACTICAL ASPECTS

- In common attack most teams played crossings to create space, to isolate defenders and generate numerical advantage:
 - backcourt players
 - cross with the line player
 - back/wing transitions

- When attacking in numerical superiority, the teams often played with two line players:
 - after a series of failed attacks, the extra outfield player was substituted back out
 - the formation was also employed as a tactic to break down the opponent's offensive defence

- The seven-versus-six offensive tactic saw relatively limited use. It was primarily adopted by teams facing a clear deficit or seeking to counter an aggressive defence (like a 3:2:1, 5:1, or a man-to-man/5+1) by forcing them to play more defensively, occasionally leading to a transition to a 6:0 defence.

ATTACK TRANSITION DEFENCE — TOGETHER WITH THE GOALKEEPER

- The general observation is that there are fewer individual fast breaks and more team fast breaks:
 - teams improved quick retreat in defence
 - transition from attack to defence often begins immediately after a goal is scored
 - team fast breaks still play a major role, as their probability of success is often higher than that of a positional attack
- The fast break was often initiated following a technical foul or a steal:
 - the quality of the goalkeeper's quick and precise passes was essential
 - in counter attack most teams attacked from a wide-court position, aiming to capitalise on the defending team's disorganisation. They often used the line player for blocking situations
- Many teams used the fast throw-off primarily to implement the tactical requirement of centralisation:
 - the line player moves into a central position. The centre back then initiates a one-on-one or two-on-two situation, with further cooperative actions as needed
 - variation of this throw-off involves a rapid wing transition, where the ball is quickly moved to the wide player, aiming to exploit the defence before they can centralise and stabilise
- During passing play, teams frequently used a cooperative action to finish the attack, with the specific action often depending on the number of remaining passes. Teams were sometimes able to execute the passive attack perfectly right down to the final pass and shot.
- Using the free throw during passing play, most teams build a wall in front of the defence to shoot over. This sequence usually involved only one or two passes before the shot was taken.



PROFILE OF THE MODERN PLAYER

The W17 EHF EURO 2025 highlighted a new generation of players who embodied the qualities of the modern handball athlete: versatility, tactical awareness, and impact on both ends of the court. Three outstanding examples illustrate this profile:

- **Antea Jerkovic** (Croatia, All-star centre back): As the central playmaker, Jerkovic combined excellent game management with decisive actions. She was not only Croatia's tactical leader in attack, controlling tempo and orchestrating plays with numerous assists, but also a reliable seven-metre shooter. Defensively, she played a key role as the forward defender in the 3:2:1 system, where her anticipation and mobility disrupted opponents' rhythm. Her strong 1v1 abilities and court vision made her indispensable on both sides of the game.
- **Martina Knezevic** (Montenegro, MVP): The Montenegrin centre back impressed as both a playmaker and an individual game-changer. She was equally effective when deployed as a right back despite being right-handed, using her strong 1v1 skills, cooperative play, and

creativity to unlock defences. Technically outstanding, Knezevic displayed a wide range of individual skills, including a powerful and precise shot. Her ability to balance scoring with team play defined her MVP performance.

- **Mária Bartková** (Slovakia, All-star left back): A powerful shooter from the backcourt, Bartková was one of the most dangerous long-range threats in the tournament. Beyond her scoring, she excelled in creating opportunities for teammates, particularly through effective crossing movements and cooperative actions. Her presence was felt not only through her shooting power but also through her capacity to connect with teammates and raise the efficiency of the Slovak attack.

All three players showcased high-level attacking qualities while also contributing significantly in defence. Their ability to combine technical skills, tactical intelligence, and two-way impact reflects the emerging standard of the modern handball player at the international youth level.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

- Slovakia won their first-ever women's gold medal
- with the expansion to 24 teams, the quality remained high; shooting efficiency was 57.6 per cent overall.
- top efficiency: Switzerland (66.8 per cent), Spain (63.4 per cent), Slovakia (62.5 per cent)
- defence is decisive: 6:0 dominant, but active 3:2:1 (Spain, Croatia, Hungary) highly effective
- success is driven more by goals conceded per 50 possessions than by scoring output
- right backs are often right-handed, turned into an advantage with tactical plays, 1v1, and passing
- attack: mostly simple tactical plays combined with line player movements/blocks; frequent use of two line players in numerical advantage
- the balance of defensive stability, transition control, and efficient simple tactics proved more decisive than raw attacking numbers

ALL-STAR TEAM

The All-star Team was based on thousands of votes from fans and a panel of EHF experts.

GOALKEEPER

Masa Dubljevic



RIGHT WING

Nayenka Noslen



LEFT WING

Lauryn Mierzwa



LINE PLAYER

Sofie-Matilde Taylor



LEFT BACK

Mária Bartková



BEST DEFENDER

Liliana Gogová



CENTRE BACK

Antea Jerkovic



MVP

Martina Knezevic



RIGHT BACK

Edurne Donderis Sánchez





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