



W17 EHF CHAMPIONSHIP (Kosovo)

YAC Qualitative Analysis



W17 EHF CHAMPIONSHIP

KOSOVO • 4–10 AUGUST 2025

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Tournament — facts & figures	4
Team performance	5
Matches & players — facts	5
Coaches	5
Defence analysis	6
Defence general aspects	6
Defence systems	6
Defence tactical aspects	7
Defence with goalkeeper	8
Attack analysis	9
Attack general aspects	9
Attack tactical aspects	9
Attack with goalkeeper	10
Attack transition defence	11
Profile of the modern player	12
Conclusions and findings	13
All-star Team	13





INTRODUCTION

The qualitative analysis of the Women's 17 EHF Championships, Kosovo provides an analysis of the performance of the eight participating nations and the players who competed at the tournament from 4 to 10 August 2025. The matches took place in the 'Palace of Youth and Sports', in Pristina, Kosovo.

The analysis uses the XPS network and Handball.ai analysis software and details technical and tactical trends from the tournament, combined with video clips from the W17 EHF Championships.

Expert: Mark Hawkins



TOURNAMENT – FACTS & FIGURES

- eight teams competed in two preliminary groups
- the best two teams of each group qualified for the semi-finals, the bottom two played placement matches
- matches were played over the course of five matchdays
- 1,249 goals were scored at a rate of 62.45 goals per game
- goals were scored with an effectiveness of 53.19 per cent
- Finland scored 190 goals, the most goals in the tournament, and won the silver medal
- the top three scorers were Liam Lulu (Israel) with 57 goals, Amanda Karén (Finland) with 46 goals, and Martina Todorova (Bulgaria) with 45 goals
- 464 saves were made at a rate of 19.7 per cent, 23.2 saves per game
- the top goalkeeper was Italian Viola Giubbini (47 saves, 29.8 per cent efficiency)
- Italy, Finland, Ukraine and Bulgaria competed in the semi-final stage

TEAM PERFORMANCE — OVERVIEW



W17 EHF CHAMPIONSHIP
KOSOVO • 4–10 AUGUST 2025

- Italy beat Finland in the goald medal match, winning 38:34
- both semi-final matches were very close: Finland beat Ukraine by a single goal having trailed by six goals at half-time; Italy beat Bulgaria by a margin of three goals
- both finalists were unbeaten, having won all three of their group matches and semi-finals
- Italy and Finland were clearly the two best teams with a large average goal difference showing superiority against all their opponents
- Despite their third-place finish, Ukraine scored fewer goals than all but two teams, but their strong defence saw them to a bronze medal

Team	Rank	Games	W	D	L	Average score		Average goal diff.
Italy	1	5	5	0	0	35.20	26.20	9.00
Finland	2	5	4	0	1	38.00	30.00	8.00
Ukraine	3	5	3	0	2	29.40	26.40	3.00
Bulgaria	4	5	2	0	3	32.40	33.40	-1.00

MATCHES & PLAYERS — FACTS

- the age category for the tournament was 2008/2009
- several countries have introduced younger players into their teams.
- Kosovo and Bulgaria had four players each from across the 2010 and 2011 generations, while Latvia, Israel and Finland had one player each from either 2010 or 2011
- Israel had the best scorer in the tournament: Liam Lulu (born in 2008) scored 57 times
- the three best goalkeepers who faced more than 30 shots were Italian pair Denise Guzzetta (12 saves from 32 at 37.5 per cent) and Viola Giubbini (47 saves from 158 at 29.8 per cent), and Zoe Salla from Great Britain (30 saves from 107 at 28.0 per cent)
- the most efficient shooters who attempted more than 20 shots were Silvia Berardi (Italy, 84.9 per cent), Veronika Plotnikova (Latvia, 80.0 per cent) and Liam Lulu (Israel, 79.2 per cent)

COACHES

- Italy and Finland had head coaches from Argentina and Germany respectively
- Bulgaria and Latvia had female head coaches and assistant coaches
- Finland, Israel, Kosovo and Great Britain also had female assistant coaches

DEFENCE GENERAL ASPECTS

The primary defensive structure across all teams was a 6-0 defence; Great Britain, Italy and Ukraine exclusively used a 6-0 system

- Italy conceded the fewest goals (131) and the least per 50 defences (17.15)
- Ukraine only conceded one more goal than Italy (132) but conceded nearly two more goals per 50 defences (18.91) because of a slower tempo in their matches
- there was a small discrepancy between all the teams; Finland in second place conceded only two goals per 50 defences more than eighth-placed Great Britain (21.01 vs 23.26)
- Italy and Finland forced the most mistakes from opponent (15.31 and 13.87 per 50 defences)
- Israel show some very promising statistics in defence, conceding only 18.61 goals per 50 defences (second) and also forced 13.67 turnovers per 50 defences (third)

Team	Rank	Goals conceded	Goals conceded per 50 defences
Italy	1	131	17.15
Finland	2	150	21.01
Ukraine	3	132	18.91
Bulgaria	4	167	21.69

DEFENCE SYSTEMS

- The most common defensive system was 6-0. Seven of the eight teams used it as their primary defence. Great Britain, Italy and Ukraine used 6-0 defence exclusively
- Finland played a 5-1 defence predominantly. 80 per cent of the defences were an open defence
- Kosovo, Bulgaria and Israel swapped between 6-0 and 5-1 defence, playing 60-70 per cent of defences as 6-0 and 30-40 per cent as a 5-1

DEFENCE TACTICAL ASPECTS

- Italy and Ukraine were two of the teams who played 6-0 defence exclusively and also had some of the best defences according to goals conceded per 50 defences:
 - both used this with aggressive positioning from backs to disrupt the transmission of the ball
 - also used wing defenders to pressure the back players or steal the ball if they lose a 1v1
- The secondary style of playing 6-0 was played most by Latvia, Bulgaria and Israel:
 - protecting the 9m area, and keeping the central zone compact
 - ready to help if the player attacking the player in possession of the ball is beaten
 - focus on forcing a less desirable shot then turning over possession saves, steals and technical fouls
- Finland primarily played a 5-1 defence, Kosovo & Bulgaria used it almost equally as much as 6-0:
 - Finland were much more open, using #2 defenders to pressure passes to the side backs, and were more willing to leave them 1v1 against the line player
 - Kosovo and Bulgaria both had more focus on preventing the transition of the ball with the front defender and the five were closer to 6m line protecting the space behind
- A key focus area for defences is the mobility of the side defenders, having the capability here to be able to pressure the passes from playmaker to side backs allows the defence to maintain control and keep attackers on the back foot. This focus, proactivity in defence from wing defenders to support this process, and understanding the situations where they must defend two situations are central principles to having a successful defence regardless of the defensive system.

ATTACK TRANSITION ATTACK — DEFENCE TOGETHER WITH THE GOALKEEPER

- All teams whilst defending in inferiority defended as a 5-0. The preference was to compact the defence and force chances to the wing, often using wing defenders to apply pressure to force a mistake from the back players.

- The goalkeeper performances were in line with the overall rankings for the most successful defences. Italy had the best goalkeeper performance with a combined 26 per cent save rate, the next best being Finland with 21 per cent, although after that the gap was closer to the weakest goalkeeper performance (Bulgaria, 17 per cent) than it was to Italy.
- The top three teams (Italy, Finland and Ukraine) were all very strong at preventing 9m goals. This would suggest they were more adept at saving the lower quality shots from the back court that might be 'expected' to be saved, supporting the defence who had forced these shots.
- Interestingly, Finland had the second-best goalkeeper performance despite facing most 6m shots. This would largely be due to the defensive style allowing this, but the Finnish goalkeepers still managed to save at an effective rate.

ATTACK ANALYSIS



W17 EHF CHAMPIONSHIP
KOSOVO • 4–10 AUGUST 2025

ATTACK GENERAL ASPECTS

- 1,249 goals were scored at a rate of 53.19 per cent.
- all teams played at a high tempo (on average teams played at 75.85 attacks per game). Six of the eight teams played on average between 73.6 and 76.4 attacks per game
- Finland and Italy had comfortably the most efficient attacks at 25.47 and 23.91 goals per 50 attacks respectively
- Finland also were very careful with the ball, making only 7.1 turnovers per 50 defences; only Israel made under 10 per 50 defences (9.8)
- despite finishing fifth Israel showed good underlying statistics, with the second fewest mistakes per 50 attacks and third most goals per 50 attacks (21.61)
- this was supported by having the best goal scorer: Liam Lulu, with 57 goals from 72 shots at 79.2 per cent
- the top scorer was a left wing, after that there were four centre backs and five left backs in the top 10 list, strongly favouring right-handed back players.

GOALS BY POSITION

	Goals	Shots	%
6m centre shots	696	969	71.8%
Wing shots	205	417	49.1%
9m shots	169	417	40.5%
7m penalty shots	138	185	74.5%

ATTACK TECHNICAL ASPECTS

- There was a big focus on 1v1 situations, especially from the two finalists who proactively sought this. Some clear examples below are of effectiveness in the duel, manipulating the defender in the first instance to move them off balance to feint in the opposite direction.

ATTACK TACTICAL ASPECTS

- In this tournament most teams used basic crosses or line crosses to set up their attacks:
 - Italy utilised a back transition to create isolations in the middle of the court
 - Finland also used a line player between one and two defenders, almost resembling four back players on occasion to create 1v1 situations

ATTACK TACTICAL ASPECTS

- There were many 5-1 defences in the competition:
 - there were little obvious alternate strategies to attack against 6-0 defences, mostly using simple crosses and creating isolations. There were some instances of using second line players from the back position, largely from Italy who employed this style against 6-0, and some examples from Latvia
 - when playing Finland, Kosovo did try to combat the 5-1 defence by using seven-against-six for an extended period.
- Whilst in numerical inferiority there were many instances when teams would not change their goalkeeper to have six court players. Bulgaria, Great Britain, Israel and Ukraine would leave the goalkeepers in the goal; Kosovo and Latvia would commonly change the goalkeepers; only the top two teams, Italy and Finland, would always change the goalkeeper.
- When attacking in numerical superiority there were two main strategies:
 - Italy, Finland and Kosovo played with most control, often with two line players, and Finland as an extension of their 6v6 attack; as a result they were three of the four most efficient teams in superiority attacks
 - the other teams played with less structure, using the line player as a screen to attack around to try and find a free space
 - Finland and Kosovo were the only teams to play seven-against-six: Finland in one match to try and recover a deficit; Kosovo also tried this at the end of one match, and in a method to combat Finland's 5-1 defence.

ATTACK TRANSITION DEFENCE — TOGETHER WITH THE GOALKEEPER

- The general trend is the teams who forced the most turnovers created more fast break attempts. While there was a higher tempo in average for the tournament and a high amount of turnovers (one every four attacks) it seems the attempt at fast breaks is more opportunistic than strategic, and capitalising on mistakes from opponents fuels this area of the game. Although no teams had an obvious strategy to play quickly, it is noted that both Ukraine and Latvia made a concerted effort to play less fast breaks and exert more control with set attacks.
- Many teams again did try to play quickly from a fast throw off. In the same vein as the fast break tendencies there was no obvious system carried out by any team, the fast throw off was exploiting the following conditions:
 - poor return running
 - defensive changes
 - disorganisation after a goal had been scored

ATTACK ANALYSIS



W17 EHF CHAMPIONSHIP
KOSOVO • 4–10 AUGUST 2025

ATTACK TRANSITION DEFENCE — TOGETHER WITH THE GOALKEEPER

- Free throws and passive play were finished in fairly straightforward ways. The most common ways for teams to solve this were:
 - setting a wall to try and shoot over the top
 - disguising shooting chances to try and play the line player
 - using the set piece to isolate a 1v1 or 2v2 situation with the line player

GOALS BY POSITION TOP TWO TEAMS

	Italy		Finland	
	Goals/shots	%	Goals/shots	%
6m centre shots	106/142	74.6	100/132	75.7
Wing shots	33/55	60.0	22/49	44.8
9m shots	23/56	41.1	32/61	52.4
7m penalty shots	12/16	75.0	21/30	70.0



PROFILE OF THE MODERN PLAYER

Mira Rigatti (Italy) is a good example of the profile of the modern player. In this particular tournament it was clear that there are key areas which differentiate the top teams from the rest.

Rigatti played two ways and in key positions in both defence and attack. In defence she took the #2 position and ranked amongst the best in the tournament in provoking mistakes from opponents, disrupting the opponent's offensive structure with the aggressive style of a #2 defender.

In attack she showed very good individual quality, particularly in isolations, with effective 1v1 skills, and finished as the tournament's 11th top goalscorer.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS



W17 EHF CHAMPIONSHIP
KOSOVO • 4–10 AUGUST 2025

- Italy became champions of the W17 EHF Championships
- the two teams in the final were both unbeaten prior to the final match
- the top two teams were the ones who were most in-keeping of modern trends of the game and according to the statistics were well deserving of these places:
 - offensive #2 defenders despite defensive system to try and control the attacking team as opposed to trying to prevent shots
 - creating isolations in attack, using a second line player or a wide line player to open the middle of the court for 1v1 situations
- many teams played without changing the goalkeeper while in inferiority and were less obviously structured in attack against an inferiority. The top two teams were well organised in both areas of the game alongside Kosovo keeping up with modern trends needed to succeed
- there was less utilisation of line players than compared to the modern trend of the game. The two highest scoring line players were from Latvia (Veronika Plotnikova) and Great Britain (Esmerelda Kelly) whose teams ranked sixth and eighth respectively.
- goals scored per 50 possessions had more of an impact on the final rankings than goals conceded per 50 possessions
- Israel had good underlying statistics, showing a trend towards improving rankings for future tournaments

ALL-STAR TEAM

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

GOALKEEPER

Yuliia Bodnarchuk



RIGHT WING

Camilla Galletti



LEFT WING

Kateryna Nazarenko



LINE PLAYER

Karina Hristova



LEFT BACK

Martina Todorova



BEST DEFENDER

Okorie Ifeoma



CENTRE BACK

Mira Rigatti



MVP

Amanda Karen



RIGHT BACK

Jamilah Ranta-aho





EHF Sport & Game Services
Platz des Europäischen Handballs
Baumgasse 60A
1030 Vienna
Austria

EHF
EUROPEAN HANDBALL
FEDERATION