

# THE ILLEGAL DEFENSE OF OUTSIDE DEFENDERS AGAINST THE WINGERS: NEW DEFENSIVE “TECHNIQUES”?

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the recent years have proliferated the illegal actions of the outside defenders against the wings that are trying to shoot at goal. What at the beginning were only sporadic actions of some experienced players which, trying to make difficult the shoot's action for the wing, “like the Indians in the old American West”, masked and hid his decoys and interventions with dissimulations, when verifying that these actions were not sanctioned properly by the referees, over the years and the competitive experience have been increasing the number of players that use this kind of ruses. This is thus in such a way that almost all the junior player's already understand that “that” is what they must do in these cases and they act as a greater “masters” every time in these circumstances. This fact is taking place with assiduity both in the scope of the masculine handball and in the feminine one. We have even been able to verify how players of lower categories already use in some occasions these “new defensive techniques” that have been universalized with the consent of the referees' teams.

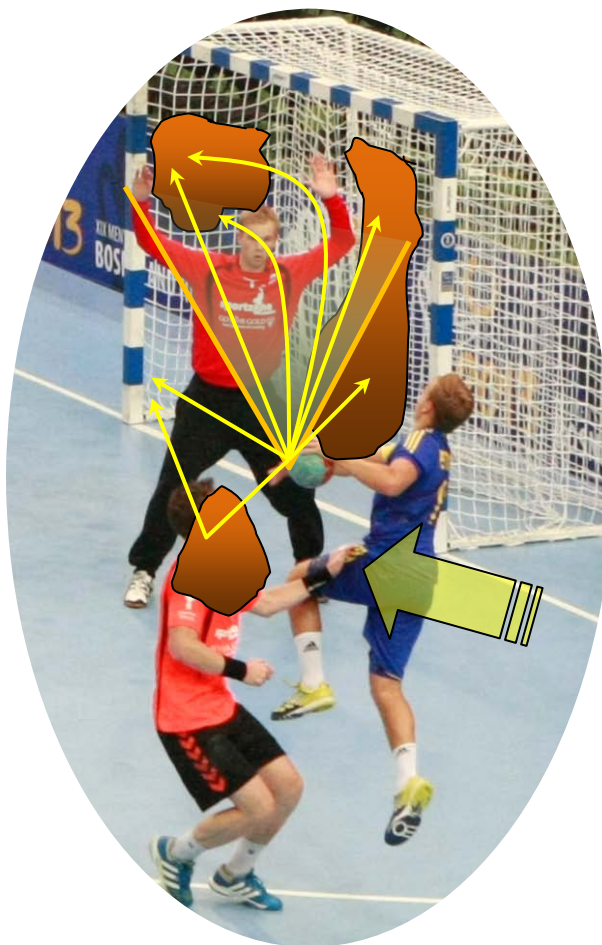
Although also it is certain that some referees apply rigorously and correctly the regulation when these cases happen sanctioning the defender, in my opinion a high percentage of cases the violator is unpunished, especially when the winger, in spite of the infraction committed by the defender, is able to reach his objective and to obtain the goal by shooting. In these cases it is usual that sanction goes to the forgetfulness. This circumstance makes that the number of players who conduct these battles -clearly illegal- it is increased remarkably and more and more this action already we could say that has become “patrimony of the outer defenders' performance”. This fact happens until the point that the question whereupon we opened this article acquires all its sense. The coaches have the right to know that if they must teach these “new techniques” to his players, especially in lower categories, so that when these young players reach at the adult age they can respond to the demands of the game. This article tries to expose the present circumstances and conditions of use, as well as to denounce what in my opinion is a regrettable act that goes against the rules of the game.

## 2. DEPARTURE POINT: ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ATTACKING-DEFENSE ACTION

In the introduction already has been left clear the type of actions to which we are talking about. But it is necessary to describe with greater clarity what are the circumstances that concur as much from the point of view of the wing player whom tries to shoot at goal as from the point of view of the defensive action of his opponent. Let us go to it:

### 2.1. Analysis of the action and circumstances of the thrower:

- It is an action of shooting at goal that takes place at high speed so that the defender does not arrive in time to prevent or to make difficult the action, and with the free shooting line -*player with ball-goal*-.
- The shoot takes place generally from the wing with little angle of shot, normally never superior to 25-30 degrees (Illustration 1).
- It is necessary to consider that the truly free spaces in goal are very reduced, much more if we valued the little angle of shot and the space that the corporal mass of the goalkeeper occupies suitably located for trying to save the shoot -in the top level most of goalkeeper reach a stature of 2 meters or next to this measure- (Illustration 1).
- Due to the little angle of the shot the most important factor to achieve the success in the action (score) it is not the power of the thrower but the ability, skill and precision in the shooting, in addition to the deceit possibilities -*feints*-. In this sense, we do not have to forget that the goalkeeper resorts frequently to these types of deceit actions -*“offering”* some free angles-, reason why not always the apparently free spaces are it in the reality because it is like a “hook” that the goalkeeper sends us to see if “we itched”.
- In order to obtain this precision the player usually resorts to corporal global actions (impulse for the jump, turns on the corporal axis, the own shooting that entails an ample kinetic chain in which, among other corporal segments, the hip is very implied), and segmental (modification of the kinetic chain at the level of the joint of the *hip* -inclination towards the weak point to locate the shooting in the short angle-, *shoulder* -to rectify the starting point of the arm-, *elbow* -to shoot in parabolic trajectory-, or *wrist* -for example, to make a lift shot-.
- For the execution of most of the previously mentioned actions ***it is completely essential that the player keeps a perfect corporal balance.***



**Illustration 1.** Moment of the winger's shot, angle for shooting with the theoretical free spaces at goal, and also possible trajectories for obtaining success. The defender contacts on the hip of the thrower treating to unbalance him.

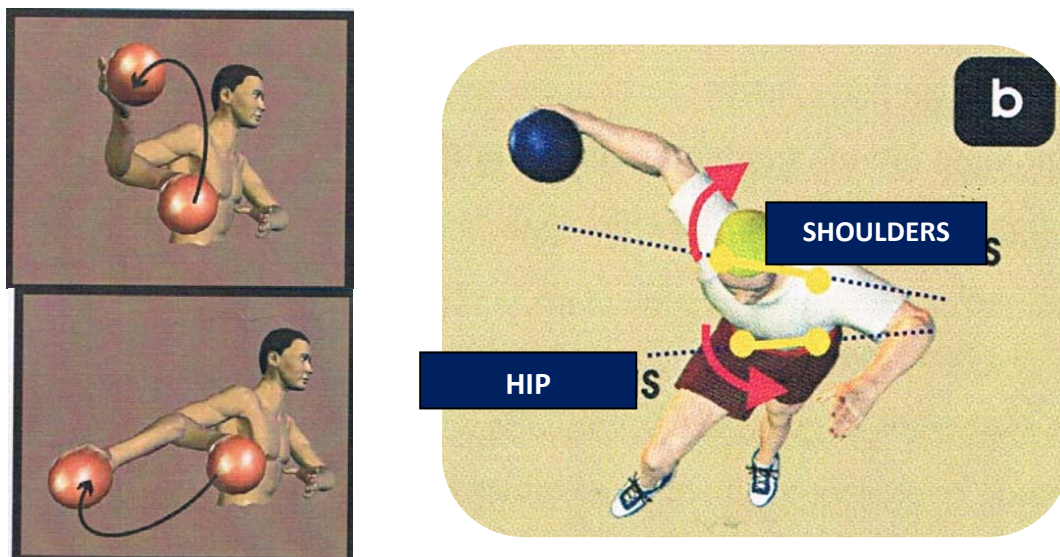
- **Any slight contact of the adversary** –for example, a touch in the hip or the thigh-, **will alter the conditions of that balance** and will prevent the exact adjustment of the joints to obtain the precision required in the shot –for example, with final result of save the shot for the goalkeeper, ball goes to the post or stringer, or slightly outside the goal- (Illustration 2).
- The shot in handball responds which it is known in biomechanics like a *sequential kinetic chain* (Kreighbaun and Barthels, 1981). The model of the sequential kinetic chains **begins with the rotation of the hip on the vertical axis**, followed by a rotation of the trunk and roll of the thorax. The action of the trunk goes united to an external rotation of the arm and a flexion of the elbow. Later one begins an internal rotation of the arm and extension of the elbow, with slight rotation and lateral flexion of the trunk towards the opposed side of the shooting.



**Illustration 2.** - Representation of the variable relative to the segmental position (angle), where  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  show the angle of Maxima torsion of the trunk in the planes cross-sectional and frontal respectively. In the photo we can observe the contact of the defender with the hip of the Croatian international winger Mirza Dzomba, action that prevents these rotations with naturalness and its Maxima effectiveness (Illustration of Pablo López, p. 219)

- At the moment that takes place the contact of the defender is originating the preparatory phase of the shot, that is to say, **at the time it is set the optimal conditions to develop the kinetic chain** (Illustration 2).
- Although it is not our objective to detail meticulously the biomechanical conditions of the action, we think it is remarkable to recall some details on the matter that better clarify the occurrences. In this way we will expose briefly the factors that determine the shooting effectiveness:
  - Forces applied in the takeoff (**the contact sometimes takes place at the moment just when those forces are altered or diminished clearly**).

- The kinetic energy of the object –ball- when it is come off the hand depends on the disposition of the kinetic chain of the segments at the beginning, and the suitable transmission of the energy amongst the segments of the kinetic chain in the shoot period itself (**it is evident that they are also going to be altered with the contact of the defender, and the result will be smaller power and smaller precision**).
- The result is related to the movements of the parts that compose them - segments implied in each action- that, connected by the joints, makes the human body a dynamic structure with different movement abilities, depending on the connection of these structures and the anatomical possibilities of the joints like union elements.
- **The shot is an open sequential kinetic chain**, because there is no great external resistance and the last element is free and the objective is to reach a great speed in the last segment of the chain -hand and fingers-, in such form that the segments are acting accelerating themselves from the *proximal* -trunk, hip- to the *distal* -hand, fingers-).
- The power and final precision depend on the transferences of the angular moments amongst the different implied segments, assuming that the angular moment of the system remains stable, **as long as external forces are not applied like usually makes the defender with his illegal intervention** - the contacts, quarrels of the t-shirt, touch in the hip, etc. -.



**Illustration 3.** - Example of some alternatives of articulate route of the arm searching for the more effective possibilities for shooting of the winger that usually are disabled for the illegal action of the outside defenders by the contact. (Adapted illustration from Pablo López, p. 50)

- The ball's position at the moment of the contact lost. Normally it can be high, but positions adjustments usually are made during the development of the kinetic chain by means of changes of direction of the arm, feints of shot, modification of the position of the arm from the starting point (to arm high for fixing the goalkeeper up, and later to shoot down or, on the contrary; to arm towards the long angle trying to move the goalkeeper into that zone and to



rectify shooting to the short angle; to stop the temporary sequence of the kinetic chain to make a lift shoot -with a short and low parabolic trajectory over the head of the goalkeeper, etc.) (Illustration 3).

- It is necessary to add that the winger does not take long time -very little, less than 1 second to be able to do anyone of these actions-. Any alteration by external forces will diminish this time and the winger will fall down in the surface of the goal area infringing the rules before being able to shoot, or simply will not be able to make what initially thought or required by the circumstances -position, situation or dynamism of the goalkeeper, free spaces obtained as a result, etc.-.

## **2.2. Analysis of the conditions and circumstances of the usual actions of the defender to make difficult the shooting of the winger**

With regard to the defender we emphasize the following aspects:

- ***The outside defender always acts with these actions because he goes late at the shooting line*** and the winger has impelled to shot or just at the moment of the impulsion, in addition the winger always is in motion.
- As a consequence, ***the thrower already is in the air most of the times, what turns the action more dangerous.***
- ***The defender does not have any possibility of arriving early at the space from penetration and shooting, neither reaching the ball*** that usually is located over 1 meter of distance -the jump has executed and the armed for the shooting, the ball is clearly away of the defender-.
- As a consequence, ***his intervention never goes directed to the ball but clearly and exclusively against the body of the thrower.***
- The corporal parts that the defender uses are: (see attached photos 1 14).
  - ***The hand nearest the thrower*** (photos 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 14).
  - ***Both arms*** (photos 1, 9, 12 and 13).
  - ***The hip*** (photo 8).
  - ***The shoulder*** (photo 8).
  - ***The foot or nearest leg*** (photos 4, 7 and 8).
  - ***The elbow*** (photo 11)
- The corporal parts of the thrower with whom it contacts the defender are (preventing the turn and unbalancing, in some case in a serious form):
  - ***The hip*** (photos 2, 3-4, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 14)
  - ***The thigh or the knee*** (photos 1, 8).
  - ***The foot closest*** (photo 10)
  - ***The trunk*** (photos 9 and 13).
  - ***To take hold of the t-shirt*** (photo 6).
- Although in most of cases it does not causes injury of the thrower, it is necessary to consider that, when unbalancing him in the air, in some cases has been possible to verify that the landing does not take place in a natural form and the damping in the

ground not always is possible, reason why the thrower for example twisting ankle by this cause.



**Illustration 4 (photos 1, 2, 3 and 4).** - *Examples of different actions of habitual contacts of the outer defenders against the winger (Photos Stéphan Pillaud)*

- The unique intention of the defender in all the cases is to obtain that imbalance of the attacker because he arrives late, and does not have any possibility of preventing the shooting neither to reach the ball, nor to block his displacement, and concentrates his activity in the body of the adversary exclusively. For this, he pushes slightly, he hold the foot, the leg or the t-shirt, etc.
- In that never satisfied eagerness “to invent” new traps, we have had the opportunity to see some defenders who place the hand in front of the face of the thrower without touching him, covering his vision momentarily (perception of the goal and the goalkeeper), and immediately to clear the hand and to pretend his “innocence”. In this case there is no contact with the attacker, but..., what is the intentionality upon this behavior?



**Illustration 5 (photos 5, 6, 7 and 8).** - Other examples of different actions from the outside defenders against the winger (Photos Stéphan Pillaud)

- In spite of making anyone of these actions, the thrower is able to shot -he can continue playing- **but his mobility of troops is reduced considerably** as we have seen in the previous section, and, consequently, his effectiveness for the reasons previously pointed diminishes.
- **All these actions take place from the sides** -left or right, depending on which winger side- **or from behind**, but never from the front.
- The action is not aggressive or apparently dangerous, **but the ruse and vileness of the action do not have to hide the evident bad intentionality and remain in a simple prank without punishment.** Indeed in this detail is where the defender hides and protects the bad intention –is not directed to the face or to the neck, for example; and it is not intense or made in a violent form-.
- To what is said before it is necessary to add that in many cases the defender is invading the goal area at the moment of the contact, **which means that indicate a seven meters throw is forced in these cases.**





**Illustration 6. (photos 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14).** - More examples of unlawful interventions, some deserving ones of the qualifying of violent (with an arm, both, the elbow, grabbing the leg or the foot of the thrower, etc.).



### 3. RULES DIMENSION

Once described the circumstances of the actions to which we talked about, we are going to describe what explains rule 8 of the game regulation, **Fouls and Unsportsmanlike Conduct**. Among other aspects, this rule says the following things: *(we will only expose what we think that has some relation with the action that we dealt in this article in a direct or indirect way, adding our own commentaries or observations underlined and emphasized)*

#### **Fouls and Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

##### **Permitted actions**

##### **It is permitted:**

- a) To use an open hand to play the ball out of the hand of another player; ***(It is not the case what concerns us, there is not any possibility of clearing the ball)***;
- b) To use bent arms to make body contact with an opponent, and to monitor and follow him in this way; ***(the defender does not try neither can control the adversary)***
- c) To use one's trunk to block the opponent, in a struggle for positions; ***(it is not possible either with these actions)***

*Later, this same rule adds:*

**Fouls that normally do not lead to personal punishment (consider, however, the decision-making criteria in 8:3 a-d)**

##### **It is not permitted:**

- b) To block the opponent with arms, hand, legs, ***or to use any part of the body to displace him or push him away; this includes a dangerous use of the elbow***, both in a starting position and in motion;
- c) ***To hold an opponent (body or uniform), even if he remains free to continue the play;***
- d) ***Run into*** or jump into ***an opponent***;

**Fouls that warrant a personal punishment under Rules 8:3-6**

#### **8.3.**

***Fouls, where the action is mainly or exclusively aimed at the body of the opponent, must lead to a personal punishment.*** This means that, in addition to a free-throw or 7-meter-throw, at least the foul is to be punished progressively, beginning with a warning (16:1), then with 2-minute suspension (16:3b) and disqualification (16:6d). ***(In all the mentioned cases the action is exclusively aimed to the body of the opponent. See details in Illustration 7)***

For more severe fouls, there are 3 further levels of punishment on the basis of the following decision-making criteria:

- Fouls that are to be punished with an immediate 2-minute suspension (8:4);
- Fouls that are to be punished with a disqualification (8:5)
- Fouls that are to be punished with a disqualification and where a written report is required (8:6);

### Decision-making criteria:

For the judgment as to which personal punishments are appropriate for specific fouls, the following decision-making criteria apply; these criteria are to be used in combination as appropriate in each situation:

- a) **The position** of the player who commits the foul (frontal position, from the side, or from behind); *(The fault is always lateral or behind the attacker)*
- b) **The part of the body against which the illegal action is aimed** (torso, shooting arm, legs, head/throat/neck);
- c) **The dynamics of the illegal action** (the intensity of the illegal body contact, and/or a foul where the opponent is in full motion); *(the contact is slight but it takes place against an opponent in motion)*
- d) **The effect** of the illegal action
  - \* The impact on the body and ball control
  - \* The reduction or prevention of the ability to move
  - \* The prevention of the continuation of the game

*(The impact is slight, it allows maintaining the control of the ball, the thrower can continue playing but it reduces the mobility of troops considerably)*

For the judgment of fouls *the particular game situation is relevant*, too (e.g., *shooting action*, running into open space, *situations with high running speed*). *(Both circumstances occur in our aim of study).*



**Illustration 7.** Details of different forms of contacts of the outside defender with the winger

### Fouls that warrant an immediate 2-minute suspension

For certain fouls, the punishment is a direct 2-minute suspension, regardless of whether the player had received a warning earlier. This applies especially for such fouls where the guilty player disregards the danger to the opponent (*see also 8:5 and 8:6*);

Taking into account the decision-making criteria under 8:3, such fouls could for instance be:

- a) Fouls those are committed with high intensity or against an opponent who is running fast; **(this is not the case)**
- b) Holding on to the opponent for a long time, or pulling him down; **(although sometimes he holds the t-shirt, the time is brief)**
- c) Fouls against the head, throat or neck; **(this circumstance does not occur either)**
- d) Hard hitting against the torso or throwing arm; **(idem a, b, and c))**
- e) **Attempting to make the opponent lose body control (e.g., grabbing the leg/foot of an opponent who is jumping; see, however, 8:5a); (This can occur in the described cases)**
- f) Running or jumping with great speed into an opponent. **(It also happen sometimes)**

### Fouls that warrant a disqualification

A player who is attacking an opponent in a way that is dangerous to his health is to be disqualified (16:6a). The special danger to the opponent's health follows from the high intensity of the foul or from the fact that the opponent is completely unprepared for the foul and therefore cannot protect himself (*see Rule 8:5 Comment*).

In addition to the criteria of 8:3 and 8:4, the following decision making criteria also apply:

- a) **The actual loss of body control while running or jumping, or during a throwing action;**

**Comment:**

**Also a foul with a very small physical impact can be very dangerous and lead to a severe injury, if the foul is committed in a moment when the player is jumping in the air or running, and therefore is unable to protect himself.**

**In this type of situation, it is the danger to the opponent and not the intensity of the body contact that is the basis for the judgment whether a disqualification is warranted.**

## 4. THE MAIN TASK OF THE COACHES: SEARCHING THE TECHNICAL QUALITY AND ITS LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The preoccupation of the coaches does not have to reside in trying to teach all traps and splitting possible to stop the attacker "it doesn't matter the way". On the contrary, he must instruct his players in those abilities that respecting the regulation, are able to build players in the best possible defensive and competitive level. This task forces in the first place trying to know the game rules very well, not only not to infringe them, but to treat "to remove the juice to them"; and secondly, to equip with best means of learning as much as possible from the physical point of view like technical-tactical that allows them to be sporting, ethical and effective in their behavior. This exposition, in addition, as a result players will be less sanctioned, and also will contribute to the best defensive performance of the team.



On this basis, we would suggest the technical possibilities that they must be taught in these circumstances. In this sense, we presented/displayed some photos in illustration 8 in which correct behaviors can be observed from the right rules point of view, but in our opinion, are insufficient. We must be more ambitious and try to impel actions that demand more physical conditioning and to assume conditions of greater physical risk.



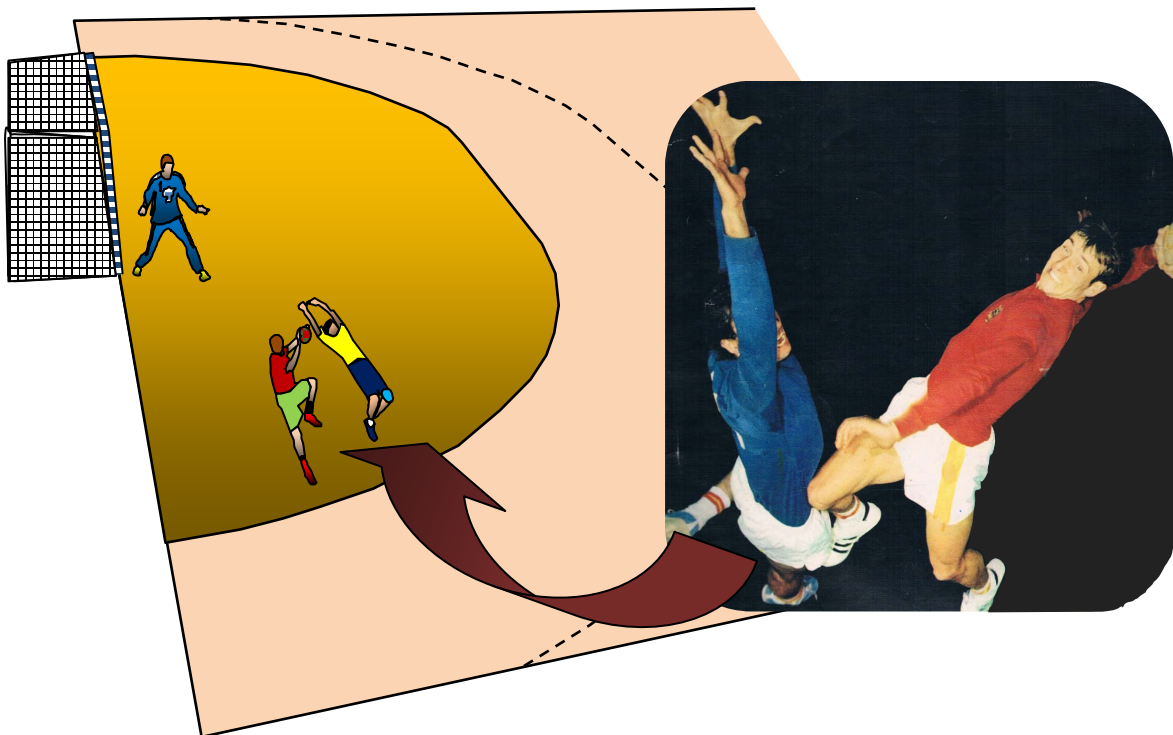
**Illustration 8.** *Some examples of correct performances of the outside defenders when they have no other possibility to avoid the shooting (Photos miarroba.com and Stéphan Pillaud)*

The defender must assume the fact that he is going to delay to prevent the shoot. Consequently, he must react so and like a defender of the central zone would react when he cannot avoid a shot of a player from back court line shooting at distance. The process of defensive tactical intentions takes us to the last possibility of this process, that is to say, **trying to obstruct the shoot**, plugging to the maximum of his possibilities the angle of possible shot, and making difficult the success of the thrower when collaborating with the goalkeeper in that

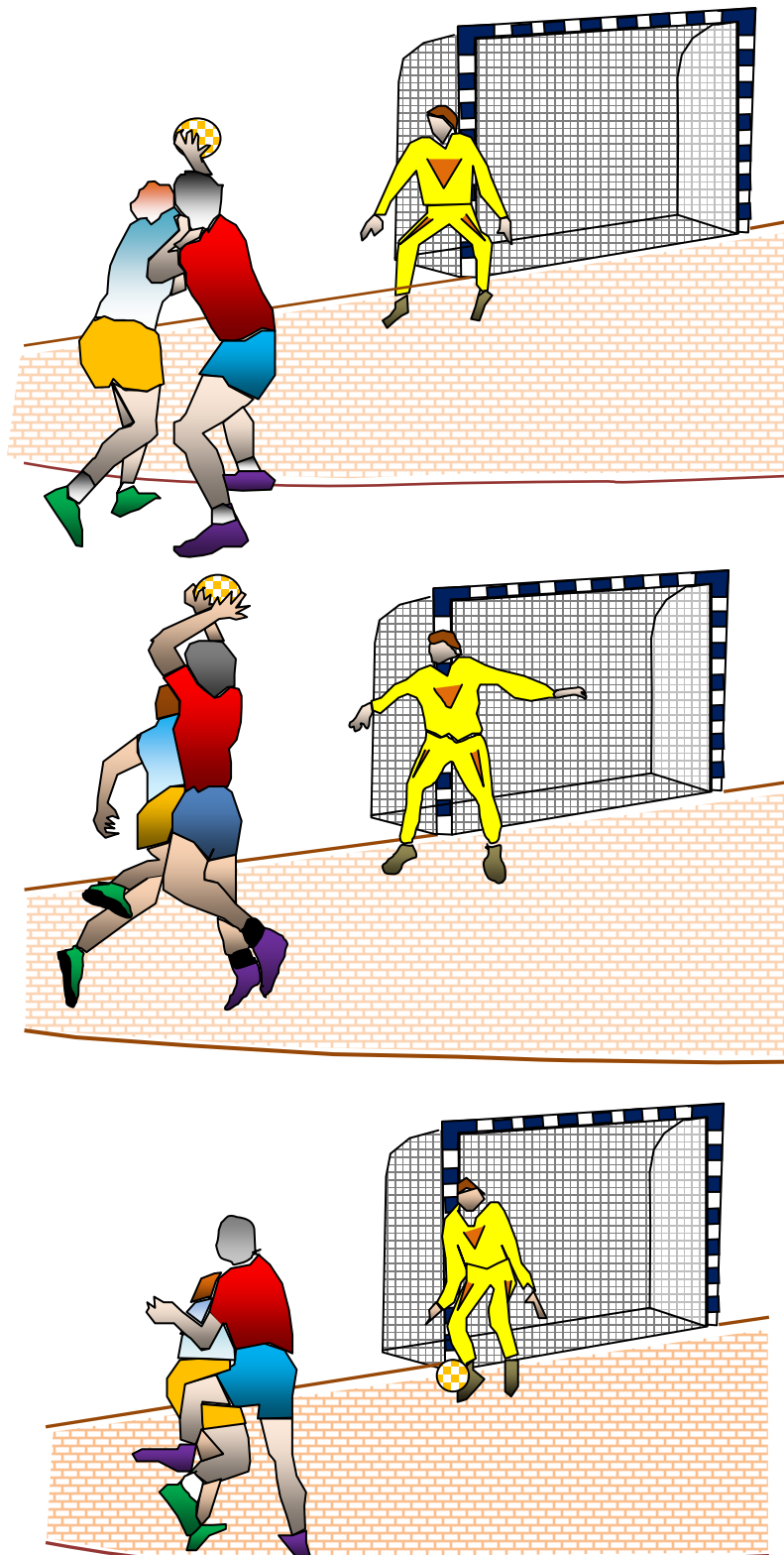
diminution of angle of shot of the thrower. In illustrations 9 and 10 can be appreciated the action that would have to be tried in these circumstances.

If the defender perceives that he is not going to arrive on time to prevent the impulsion of the thrower he must concentrate in other alternatives, among which we suggest:

- a) Stopping the race to avoid to coil the attacker being treated to remain quiet, with his low arms stuck to the body or elevated vertically and without opening the legs (photos of illustration 8)
- b) Not trying to shorten way by shortening the path cut such form that always ends up invading the goal area (7 meters throw)
- c) Shortening the way only can be done reorienting his race changing his direction and impelling with the legs towards the interior of the goal area, and extending his body and arms, always trying to be placed ahead and in a perpendicular form towards the foreseeable direction of the impulsion of the winger, making difficult with this action the gain of shot angle, and, in optimal situations, even causing an attacking fault for occupying the space in the air before the thrower. In any case, we will force that the thrower must protect the ball and modify the armed position at least (Illustrations 9 and 10, and sequence of photos in illustration 11)

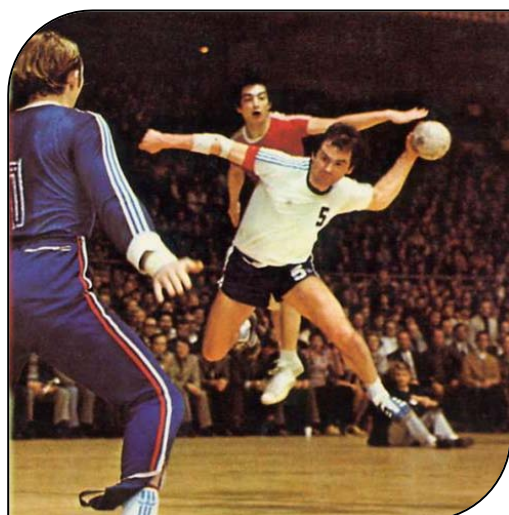
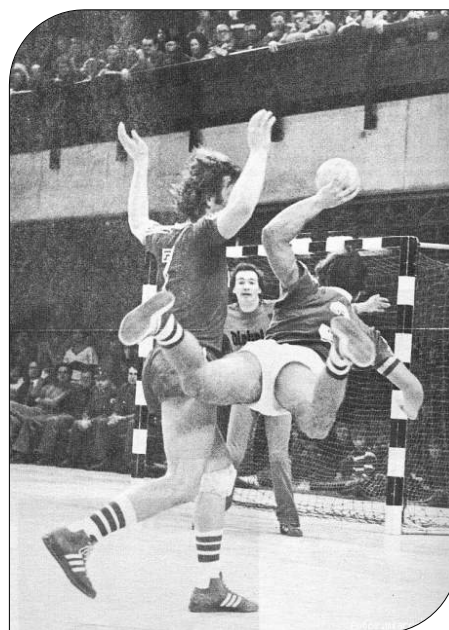
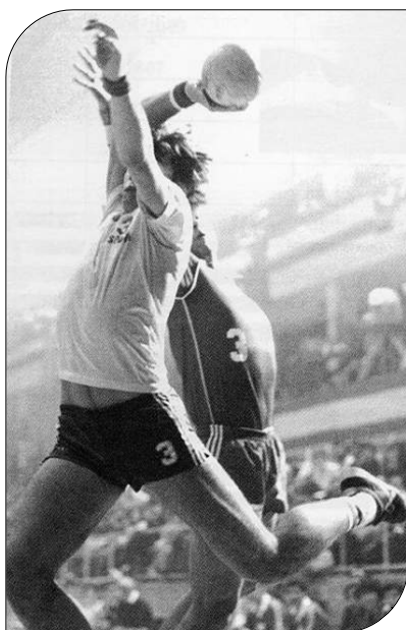


**Ilustración 9.** *General view of the situation of the defender's action accompanied by a photography in which it is appraised with detail (Photo Isabel Benito)*



**Illustration 10.** *Defender action's sequence. It is possible to note how in spite of not preventing the shooting, when closing the shot angle makes difficult the shot to a great extent and facilitates the positive intervention of the goalkeeper.*





**Illustration 11.** In these photos we can see some examples of high technical quality actions that some players are trying to make in these circumstances (Photos miarroba.com).

- d) Depending on the form and height of the winger's armed form (located more or less far or accessible), as well as the distance to which the defender is relative to the attacker and the ball, the defender ***must try to concentrate himself exclusively in the position of the ball***, and in a smooth form, without making impetuous movement, placing the open hand trying to remove the ball the hand of the opponent, through a slight touch. This movement is sometimes enough to obtain that the ball off the hand of the thrower (Illustration 11 and details in illustration 12). This action demands high accuracy and its bad execution will inescapably entail a 7 meters throw, in addition of what it involves a far from negligible risk.



**Illustration 12.** - Details of the action of the hand of the defender.

#### **FINAL CONCLUSION:**

Given the diverse circumstances that could occur, it is not our objective to indicate the type of punishment that could correspond in each tactical situation, because we understand that corresponds mainly to the criterion and the referee experience, but in my opinion ***anyone of the indicated actions must be object of progressive disciplinary sanction***. It has been sufficiently clear that the described actions are unlawful and must be sanctioned much more than usually happens in the competitions. If the top level referees allow them, taking not much

time we will be able to observe how players in low categories will lavish these actions and the referees of those categories will try to apply what they see to do and apply to their “older brothers”. Finally, I dare to raise with the irony of the case the following question: Must the coaches incorporate those new techniques to the patrimony of intervention of their players? We hope to obtain an answer during the competitions, although we think that the solution is in defending correctly through the fast displacements of legs that can avoid to their due time the acquisition of the space on the part of the attacking player and to try suitable technical solutions. And of course, mainly, to apply in the right way the rules.

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(I would like to emphasize that the responsibility of some of the presented/displayed photos is unknown for me, and I cannot be sure to have respected the true intellectual property. In these cases, if some of these authors have been bothered, I request my sincere excuses)

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