

## All about Handball

**Handball** (also known as **team handball**, **Olympic handball** or **European handball**) is a team sport in which two teams of seven players each (six outfield players & a goalkeeper) pass & bounce a ball to throw it into goal of the opposing team. The team with the most goals after two periods of 30 minutes wins.

Modern handball is usually played indoors, but outdoors variants exist in the form of field handball (which was more common in the past) and beach handball. American handball is a completely different sport.

The game is quite fast and includes body contact as the defenders try to stop the attackers from approaching the goal. Contact is only allowed when the defensive player is completely in front of the offensive player, i.e. between the offensive player and the goal. This is referred to as a player sandwich. Any contact from the side or especially from behind is considered dangerous and is usually met with penalties. When a defender successfully stops an attacking player, the play is stopped and restarted by the attacking team from the spot of the infraction or on the nine meter line. Unlike in basketball where players are allowed to commit only 5 fouls in a game (6 in the NBA), handball players are allowed an unlimited number of "faults," which are considered good defense and disruptive to the attacking team's rhythm.

Goals are scored quite frequently in handball; usually both teams score at least 20 goals each, and it is not uncommon to have a match end 33-31. This was not true in the earliest history of the game, when the scores were more akin to that of ice hockey. But, as offensive play has improved since the late 1980s, particularly the use of counterattacks (fast breaks) after a failed attack from the other team, goal scoring has increased.

### Origins and Development

There are records of handball-like games in medieval France, and among the Inuit in Greenland, in the Middle Ages. By the 19th century, there existed similar games of *håndbold* from Denmark, *házená* in the Czech Republic, *hádzaná* in Slovakia, *gandbol* in Ukraine, *torball* in Germany, as well as versions in Uruguay.

The team handball game of today was formed by the end of the 19th century in northern Europe, primarily Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden. Holger Nielsen, a Danish gym teacher, drew up the rules for modern handball (*håndbold*) in 1898 and published them in 1906, and Rasmus Nicolai Ernst, another Danish teacher, did something similar in 1897.

Another set of team handball rules was published on 29 October 1917 by Max Heiser, Karl Schelenz, and Erich Konigh from Germany. After 1919 these rules were improved by Karl Schelenz. The first international games were played under these rules, between Germany and Belgium for men in 1925 and between Germany and Austria for women in 1930.

In 1926, the Congress of the International Amateur Athletics Federation nominated a committee to draw up international rules for field handball. The International Amateur Handball Federation was formed in 1928, and the International Handball Federation was formed in 1946.

Men's field handball was played at the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin at the request of Adolf Hitler. The sport was removed from the 1940 Olympic Summer Games. However, during the next several decades, the game of handball flourished and evolved as an indoor sport in the Scandinavian countries. The sport re-emerged onto the world stage as team handball for the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. Women's team handball was added at the 1976 Summer Olympics. Due to its popularity in the region, the Eastern European countries that



refined the event became the dominant force in the sport when it was reintroduced.

The International Handball Federation organized the men's world championship in 1938 and every 4 (sometimes 3) years from World War II to 1995. Since the 1995 world championship in Iceland, the competition has been every two years. The women's world championship has been played since 1957. The IHF also organizes women's and men's junior world championships.

### **Playing field**

Schematic diagram of a handball playing field (German captions).

Handball is played on a court 40 meters long by 20 meters wide (40 m x 20 m), with a goal in the center of each end. The goals are surrounded by a near-semicircular area, called the zone or the crease, defined by a line six meters from the goal. A dashed near-semicircular line nine meters from the goal marks the free-throw line. Each line on the court is part of the area it encompasses. This implies that the middle line belongs to both halves at the same time.

### **Goals**

Each goal has a rectangular clearance area of three meters in the width and two meters in the height. The goal posts and the crossbar must be made out of the same material (e.g. wood or aluminum) and feature a quadratic cross section with a side of 8 cm (3 in). The three sides of the beams visible from the playing field must be painted alternating in two contrasting colors which both have to contrast against the background. The colors on both goals must be the same.

Each goal must feature a net. This must be fastened in such a way that a ball thrown into does not leave or pass the goal under normal circumstances.

### **Goal perimeter**

The goals are surrounded by the crease. This area is delimited by two quarter circles with a radius of six meters around the far corners of each goal post and a connecting line parallel to the goal line. Only the defending goalkeeper is allowed inside this perimeter. However, the court players may catch and touch the ball in the air within it as long as the player starts his jump outside the zone and releases the ball before he lands.

If a player contacts the ground inside the goal perimeter he must take the most direct path out of it. However, should a player cross the zone in an attempt to gain an advantage (e.g. better position) his team cedes the ball. Similarly, violation of the zone by a defending player is only penalized if he does so to gain an advantage in defending.

### **Substitution area**

Outside of one long edge of the playing field to both sides of the middle line are the substitution areas for each team. The areas usually contain the benches as seating opportunities. Team officials, substitutes and suspended players must wait within this area. The area always lies to the same side as the team's own goal. During half-time substitution areas are swapped. Any player entering or leaving the play must cross the substitution line which is part of the side line and extends 4.5 meters from the middle line to the team's side.

### **Duration**



**Team timeout**

A standard match for all teams of 16 and older has two periods of 30 minutes with a 10 minute half-time. Teams may switch sides of the field, as well as benches. For youths the game duration is:

- 2 x 25 minutes at ages 12 to 16.
- 2 x 20 minutes at ages 8 to 12.

However, national federations of some countries may differ in their implementation from the official guidelines.

If a decision must be reached in a particular match (e.g. in a tournament) and it ends in a draw after regular time, there are at maximum two overtimes of 2 x 5 minutes with a 1 minute break each. Should these not decide the game either, the winning team is determined in a penalty shootout.

The referees may call *timeout* according to their sole discretion, typical reasons are injuries, suspensions or court cleaning. Penalty throws should only trigger a timeout for lengthy delays as a change of the goalkeeper.

Each team may call one *team timeout* (TTO) per period which lasts one minute. This right may only be invoked by team in ball possession. To do so, the representative of the team lays a green card marked by black "T" on the desk of the timekeeper. The timekeeper then immediately interrupts the game by sounding an acoustic signal and stops the time.

### Referees

A Handball match is led by two equal referees. Some national bodies allow games with only a single referee in special cases like illness on short notice. Should the referees disagree on any occasion, a decision is made on mutual agreement during a short timeout, or, in case of punishments, the more severe of the two comes into effect. The referees are obliged to make their decisions "on the basis of their observations of facts".<sup>[3]</sup> Their judgements are final and can only be appealed against if not in compliance with the rules.



### The referees (blue shirts) keep both teams between them

The referees position themselves in such a way that the team players are confined between them. They stand diagonally aligned so that each can observe one side line. Depending on their positions one is called *field referee* and the other *goal referee*. These positions automatically switch on ball turnover. They physically exchange their positions approximately every 10 minutes (long exchange) and change sides every 5 minutes (short exchange).

The IHF defines 18 hand signals for quick visual communication with players and officials. The signal for warning or disqualification is accompanied by a yellow or red card, respectively. The referees also use whistle blows to indicate infractions or restart the play.

The referees are supported by a *scorekeeper* and a *timekeeper* who attend to formal things like keeping track of goals and suspensions or starting and stopping the clock, respectively. They also have an eye on the benches and notify the referees on substitution errors. Their desk is located in between both substitutions areas.

### **Team players, substitutes and officials**

Each team consists of 7 players on court and up to 7 substitute players on the bench. One player on the court must be the designated goalkeeper differing in his or her clothing from the rest of the field players. Substitution of players can be done in any number and at any time during game play. An exchange takes place over the substitution line. A prior notification of the referees is not necessary. Some national bodies as the Deutscher Handball Bund (DHB, "German Handball Federation") allow substitution in junior teams only when in ball possession or during timeouts. This restriction is intended to prevent early specialization of players to offense or defense.

### **Field players**

Field players are allowed to touch the ball with any part of their bodies above the knee (knee included). As in several other team sports, a distinction is made between catching and dribbling. A player who is in possession of the ball may stand stationary for only three seconds and may only take three steps. They must then either shoot, pass or dribble the ball. At any time taking more than three steps is considered traveling and results in a turnover. A player may dribble as many times as he wants (though since passing is faster it is the preferred method of attack) as long as during each dribble his hand contacts only the top of the ball. Therefore basketball-style carrying is completely prohibited, and results in a turnover. After the dribble is picked up, the player has the right to another three seconds or three steps. The ball must then be passed or shot as further holding or dribbling will result in a "double dribble" turnover and a free throw for the other team. Other offensive infractions that result in a turnover include, charging, setting an illegal screen, or carrying the ball into the six meter zone.

### **Goalkeeper**

Only the goalkeeper is allowed move freely within the goal perimeter, although he may not cross the goal perimeter line while carrying or dribbling the ball. Within the zone, he is allowed to touch the ball with all parts of his body including his feet. The goalkeeper may participate in the normal play of his team mates. As he is then considered as normal field player, he is typically substituted for a regular field player if his team uses this scheme to outnumber the defending players. As this player becomes the designated goalkeeper on the court, he must wear some vest or bib to identify himself as such.

If the goalkeeper deflects the ball over the outer goal line, his team stays in possession of the ball in contrast to other sports like soccer. The goalkeeper resumes the play with a throw from within the zone ("goalkeeper throw"). Passing to your own goalkeeper results in a turnover. Throwing the ball against the head of the goalkeeper when he is not moving is to be punished by disqualification ("red card").

### **Team officials**

Each team is allowed to have a maximum of four team officials seated on the benches. An official is anybody who is neither player nor substitute. One official must be the designated representative who is usually the team manager. The representative may call team timeout once every period and may address scorekeeper, timekeeper and referees. Other officials typically include physicians or managers. Neither official is allowed to enter the playing court without permission of the referees.

### **Ball**



**A size III handball**



The ball is spherical and must either be made of leather or a synthetic material. It is not allowed to have a shiny or slippery surface. As it is intended to be operated by a single hand, the official sizes vary depending on age and gender of the participating teams.

Size Used by	Circumference (in cm)	Weight (in g)
III Men and male youth older than 16	58–60	425–475
II Women, male youth older than 12 and female youth older than 14	54–56	325–375
I Youth older than 8	50–52	290–330



**Resin product used to improve ball handling**

Though not officially regulated, the ball is usually resinated. The resin improves the ability of the players to manipulate the ball with a single hand like spinning trick shots. Some indoor arenas prohibit the usage of resin since many products leave sticky stains on the ground.

#### **Awarded throws**

The referees may award a special throw to a team. This usually happens after certain events like scored goals, off-court balls, turnovers, timeouts, etc. All of these special throws require the thrower to obtain a certain position and pose restrictions on the positions of all other players. Sometimes the execution must wait for a whistle blow by the referee.

#### **Throw-off**

A throw-off takes place from the center of the court. The thrower must touch the middle line with one foot and all of the other players must be in the half of their team. The defending players must keep a distance of at least three meters to the thrower. A throw-off occurs at the begin of each period and after the opposing team scored a goal. It must be cleared by the referees.

Modern Handball introduced the "fast throw-off" concept, i. e. the play will be immediately restarted by the referees as soon as the executing team fulfills its requirements. Many teams leverage this rule to score easy goals before the opposition has time to form a stable defense line.

#### **Throw-in**

The team which did not touch the ball last is awarded a throw-in when the ball fully crosses the side line or touches the ceiling. If the ball crosses the outer goal line, a throw-in is only awarded if the defending field players touched the balls last. Execution requires the thrower to place one foot on the nearest outer line to the cause. All defending players must keep a distance of three meters. However, they are allowed to stand immediately outside their own goal area even when the distance is less.

### Goalkeeper-throw

If ball crosses the outer goal line without interference from the defending team or when deflected by their goalkeeper, a goalkeeper-throw is awarded to the defending team. This is the most common turnover. The goalkeeper resumes the play with a throw from anywhere within his goal area.

### Free-throw

A free-throw restarts the play after an interruption by the referees. It takes place from the spot where the interruption was caused as long as this spot is outside of the free-throw line of the opposing team. In the latter case the throw is deferred to the nearest spot on the free-throw line. Free-throws are the equivalent to free-kicks in association football. The thrower may take a direct attempt for a goal which is, however, not feasible if the defending team organized a defense.



A 7-meter throw

### 7-meter throw

A 7-meter throw is awarded when a clear chance of scoring is illegally destroyed anywhere on the court by a opposing team player, official or spectator. It is also awarded when the referees interrupted a legitimate scoring chance for any reason. The thrower steps with one foot on the 7-meter line with only the defending goalkeeper between him and the goal. The goalkeeper must keep a distance of three meters which is marked by a short tick on the floor. All other players must remain behind the free-throw line until execution. The thrower must await the whistle blow of the referee. A 7-meter throw is the equivalent to a penalty kick in association football, it is, however, far more common and typically occurs several times in a single game.

### Penalties



Yellow card shown in a handball match

Penalties are given to players, in progressive format, for fouls that require more punishment than just a free-throw. "Actions" directed mainly at the opponent and not the ball (such as reaching around, holding, pushing, hitting, tripping, or jumping into opponent) as well as contact from the side or from behind a player are all considered illegal and subject to penalty. Any infraction that prevents a clear scoring opportunity, will result in a seven-meter penalty shot.

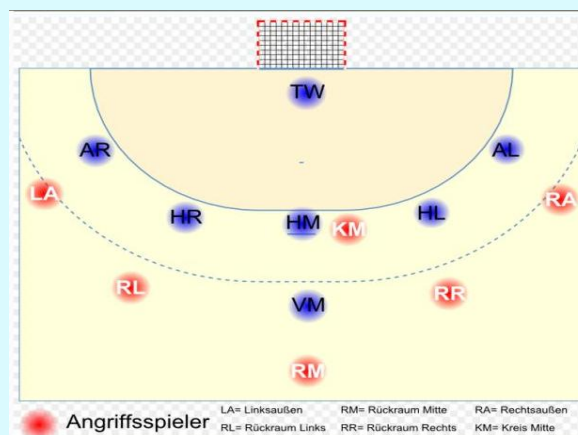
Typically the referee will give a warning yellow card for an illegal action, but if the contact was particularly dangerous the referee can forego the warning for an immediate two-minute suspension. A player can only get one warning before receiving a two minute suspension. One player is only permitted two 2-minute suspensions; third time he/she will be shown the red card.

A red card results in an ejection from the game and a two minute penalty for the team. A player may receive a red card directly for particularly rough penalties. For instance any contact from behind during a fast break is now being treated with a red card. A red carded player has to leave the playing area completely. A player who is disqualified may be substituted with another player after the two minute penalty is served. A Coach/Official can also be penalized progressively. Any coach/official who receives a 2-minute suspension will have to pull out one of his players for two minutes - note: the player is not the one punished and can be substituted in again, because the main penalty is the team playing with a man less than the other.

If a player assaults a referee, an opponent or any other person, the referee can expel the player forming a cross over his head with his arms, which will tell the player that he/she will have to leave the game completely and his team will have to play a man down for the remainder of the game. This expulsion is the most severe penalty possible in handball.

After having lost the ball during an attack, the ball has to be laid down quickly or else the player not following this rule will face a 2-minute suspension. Also gesticulating or verbally questioning the referee's order, as well as arguing with the officials decisions, will normally result in a 2-minute suspension. If it is done in a very provocative way, a player can be given a second 2-minute suspension if he/she does not walk straight off the field to the bench after being given a suspension, or if the referee deems the tempo deliberately slow. Illegal substitution, any substitution that does not take place in the specified substitution area or where the entering player enters before the exiting player exits is also punishable with a 2 minute suspension.

## Game play Formations



**Positions of attacking (red) and defending players (blue), in a 5-1 defense formation. (German captions)**

Players are typically referred to by the position they are playing. The positions are always denoted from the view of the respective goalkeeper, so that a defender on the right opposes an attacker on the left. However, not all of the following positions may be occupied depending on the formation or potential suspensions.

#### Offense

- Left and right wingman. These typically excel at ball control and wide jumps from the outside of the goal perimeter to get into a better shooting angle at the goal. Teams usually try to occupy the left position with a right-handed player and vice versa.
- Left and right backcourt. Goal attempts by these players are typically made by jumping high and shooting over the defenders. Thus, it is usually advantageous to have tall players for these positions.
- Center backcourt. A player with experience is preferred on this position who acts as playmaker and the handball equivalent of a basketball point guard.
- Pivot (left and right, if applicable). This player tends to intermingle with the defense, setting picks and attempting to disrupt the defense formation. This positions requires the least jumping skills but ball control and physical strength are an advantage.

#### Defense

- Far left and far right. The opponents of the wingmen.
- Half left and half right. The opponents of the left and right backcourts.
- Back center (left and right). Opponent of the pivot.
- Front center. Opponent of the center backcourt, may also be set against another specific backcourt player.

#### Offensive play

Attacks are played with all field players on the side of the defenders. Depending on the speed of the attack, one distinguishes between three attack *waves* with a decreasing chance of success:



**Women's Handball - a jump shot completes a fastbreak**

#### First Wave

*First wave* attacks are characterized by the absence of defending players around their goal perimeter. The chance of success is very high the throwing player is unhindered in his scoring attempt. Such attacks typically occur after an intercepted pass or a steal and if the defending team can switch fast to offense. The far left/far right will usually try to run the attack as they are not as tightly bound in the defense. On a turnover, they immediately sprint forward and receive the ball halfway to the other goal. Thus, these positions are commonly held by quick players.



### Second Wave

If the first wave is not successful and some defending players gained their positions around the zone, the second wave comes into play: The remaining players advance with quick passes to locally outnumber the retreating defenders. If one player manages to step up to the perimeter or catches the ball at this spot he becomes unstoppable by legal defensive means. From this position the chance of success is naturally very high. Second wave attacks became much more important with the "fast throw-off" rule.

### Third Wave

The time during which the second wave may be successful is very short, as then the defenders closed the gaps around the zone. In the *third wave*, the attackers use standardized attack patterns usually involving crossing and passing between the back court players who either try to pass the ball through a gap to their pivot, take a jumping shot from the backcourt at the goal, or lure the defense away from a wingman.

The third wave evolves into the normal offensive play when all defenders reach not only the zone but gain their accustomed positions. Some teams then substitute specialized offense players. However, this implies that these players must play in the defense should the opposing team be able to switch quickly to offense. The latter is another benefit for fast playing teams.

If the attacking team does not make sufficient progress (eventually releasing a shot on goal), the referees can call **passive play** (since about 1995, the referee gives a passive warning some time before the actual call by holding one hand up in the air, signaling that the attacking team should release a shot soon), turning control over to the other team. A shot on goal or an infringement leading to a yellow card or two minute penalty will mark the start of a new attack, causing the hand to be taken down, but a shot blocked by the defense or a normal free throw will not. If it were not for this rule, it would be easy for an attacking team to stall the game indefinitely, as it is difficult to intercept a pass without at the same time conceding dangerous openings towards the goal.

### Defensive play

The usual formations of the defense are 6-0, when all the defense players line up between the 6 meter and 9 meter lines to form a wall; the 5-1, when one of the players cruises outside the 9 meter perimeter, usually targeting the center forwards while the other 5 line up on the six meter line; and the lesser common 4-2 when there are two such defenders out front. Very fast teams will also try a 3-3 formation which is close to a switching man-to-man style. The formations vary greatly from country to country and reflect each country's style of play. 6-0 is sometimes known as "flat defense", and all other formations are usually called "offensive defense".

Web Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team\\_handball](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_handball)

