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ON (TEAM) HANDBALL TERMS IN ENGLISH¹

For Harold B. Allen

For over two decades a new sport has been spreading in the English-speaking countries. The game is variously called *handball*, *team handball*, *indoor handball* etc. and arrived on the British and North American sporting scene from Europe, where its popularity is second only to that of soccer. This newcomer to English and American physical education and sport has been producing new vocabulary of course, a short survey of which will be the task of this article. A brief history of the spread of the game in Europe, England, and the United States will be presented, followed by a discussion of the terms *handball* and *team handball*, and a listing of some of the newly-produced vocabulary.

The names and abbreviations in this paper are:

- Abrahamson Abrahamson, Richard. 1977. Team Handball.
Encyclopedia of Physical Education, Fitness and
Sports, series editor Thomas K. Cureton, Jr.,
537-43. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Dwight Dwight, Mary Phyl, Jo Oliver and Maxine Grace
Hunter eds. 1976. Team Handball, Racquetball,
Orienteering. Washington, D.C.: American Alliance
for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation.

- Groote Groote, Roger de, 1975. Sports olympiques: Album officiel: Montréal 1976, Olympic Sports: Official Album: Montréal 1976. Translated and adapted from the French by Betty Howell. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.
- jayfro 12-page booklet entitled 'Team Handball' of jayfro corp., Waterford, Conn., n. d.
- Jessup Jessup, Harvey M. and Sara D. Davis. 1972. Team Handball. The Little Known Olympic Sports, ed. by Harvey M. Jessup, 49-51. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation.
- Mezey Mezey, Andy. 1976. Handball. The Olympic Games, ed. by Lord Killanin and John Rodda, 112-3. New York: Macmillan.
- NEB The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. 15th ed. Micro-paedia Volume IX, 857, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974.
- OCSG The Oxford Companion to Sports and Games, ed. by John Arlott. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Park Park, Sung J. and Brian W. Fahey. 1973. Team Handball: An Introductory Manual. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- thusa Team Handball - U.S.A. Fall/Winter 1979. No. 6.
- WSD Webster's Sports Dictionary. Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam, 1976.

1. In the official album of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, which contains an original French text by the French Olympic attaché Roger de Groote and its translation into English, one of the events, *handball*, is described as a sport which, contrary to what many might believe, is not Anglo-Saxon in origin. Mr. de Groote (180) writes the following:

In fact, there are two countries which claim to have invented this sport: Denmark and Germany. Both might agree that the game as it is played today bears many striking resemblances to a game called *hazena* which was played by the Czechs in the 19th century. In all fairness, however, the role of the Danes and Germans in the development of this sport was of great significance.

During World War I, in 1915 to be precise, a teacher of physical education in Berlin named *Schellens* thought of adapting the rules of football to have a game played with hands instead of feet. He called it simply enough: handball. It was played outdoors on a large field with teams of eleven players. A similar sport was being played indoors in Denmark at the same time, with seven men to a team.

Eleven man handball developed first in the countries neighbouring Germany: Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Rumania, and because of immigrants from these countries, the United States, while seven man handball was played mostly in the Scandinavian countries.

In 1927, the International Amateur Handball Federation

was founded. Eleven-man handball was first presented within the framework of the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. Germany won the tournament, beating Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Rumania and the United States. In 1946, an international congress was held in Copenhagen to dissolve the International Amateur Handball Federation and to found the Fédération Internationale de Handball (or: International Handball Federation). Gradually, the seven-man team became predominant. Today handball is played with the seven-man teams all over the world. According to the President of the Canadian Team Handball Association, A. Mezey (113), 'more than sixty countries are affiliated to the International Federation, with 2,600,000 registered players of both sexes'.

The OCSG (464) reads: 'In 1957 the first British handball club was formed. In the early years only field handball [i.e. eleven-man handball, M.K.] was played. Since 1967 the game in Great Britain has been put on a national basis by the British Handball Association, with headquarters in Liverpool. The game is also played in British Commonwealth countries.'

Although under a somewhat different name, the game began to spread on the other side of the Atlantic as well. According to Jessup (50) 'Team Handball was introduced into the United States around 1959 by a group of European immigrants living in the New York-New Jersey area, which is still the center of handball activity in this country. In 1963, the U. S. National Team, composed mostly of European immigrants, went to Switzerland for the Out-Door World Championships.' Since

then U. S. seven-man teams have also competed in the 1964, 1970 and 1974 World Championships, the 1972 Olympics in Munich and the 1976 Olympics in Montreal.

In the preface to the first team handball manual ever published in the U. S. (Park ix), we are informed that 'A great effort has been made to promote T-H [i. e. team handball, M. K.] in the United States by the U. S. Army and Reserves in conjunction with the United States Team Handball Federation.' This Federation has its headquarters in Short Hills, New Jersey, and publishes a newsletter called *Team Handball - U. S. A.* six times a year. Since the introduction of team handball into the U. S. by Dr. Peter Buehning in 1959, the game has spread throughout the fifty states (cf. Abrahamson 538).

(Seven-man handball is played on a court which is 40 m long and 20 m wide, with goals 3 m wide and 2 m high. The goal area is marked with a 3 m long straight line and two quarter circles. The straight line is 6 m from the goal and parallel to it, and is extended by the quarter circles on either side. A quarter circle has a 6 m radius and its center is at the corner of the goal. 3 m from the goal area line and parallel to it is the free throw line.)

2. The English word *handball* refers to three different games today, only one of which is entered in the *OEDS* ('a game resembling fives') whereas none of them are found in the *OED* itself. This game, also referred to as *Irish handball* (*OCSG* 464),

is defined in the 1977 international edition of *The Encyclopedia Americana* (vol. 13, 760) as follows: 'a game played in a walled court or against a single wall, using a small rubber ball that is struck against the wall with hand or fist.' This type of handball is played by two or four persons, in three versions: four-wall, three-wall and one-wall.

When used to refer to the outdoor game played by eleven men on each side, *handball* usually goes by the following alternative names: *field handball* (OCSG 461) and *fieldball* (NEB).

Seven-man handball, which is sometimes called *indoor handball*, is usually called *handball* in Great Britain (OCSG 461 ff.), whereas it is most often named *team handball* in the United States and Canada. Following are a few examples to illustrate present-day North American usage, which is still rather unsettled:

Jessup 50 "'Team Handball' is simething of a misnomer, since the sport little resembles the indoor activity we call handball."

Park ix "This sport, relatively new to America is known as Team Handball, Field Handball, German Handball, or simply Handball."

Mezey 112 "Handball as it is known today is less than half a century old and one of the most recent Olympic sports."

thusa 8 "How does one initiate a comprehensive team handball program in a university community? ... The first step in the implementation process was to include an instructional course within the P.E. curriculum. Thirty students registered. Interest and enthusiasm was immediate, and word about the

'other' handball spread."

An investigation of the last 41 issues of the series *Britannica Book of the Year* (1939 through 1979) shows us how 'Irish handball', 'field handball' and 'team handball' have all been termed *handball* for four decades. *Handball* is used to refer to 'Irish handball' from 1939 through 1965, and then in 1970, 1976, 1978 and 1979. Both Irish and team handball competition results are cited under *handball* in 1966, 1969 and 1971. Finally, the word denotes 'team handball' and 'field handball' in the single instance of the 1967 yearbook, whereas it denotes 'team handball' exclusively in the 1972, 1975 and 1977 yearbooks.

In order to gain some idea of what Americans actually meant by the word *handball* in 1979, I asked 138 students at Indiana University the following questions: "How many players are needed for a proper game of football? Basketball? Handball?" 134 students gave "two" or "four" in answer to the question on handball, while four gave answers ranging from "six" to "eighteen". This shows that, to the students asked, the word almost exclusively means the singles or doubles game, and not the teamgame.

According to the files of the new etymological dictionary of German being prepared in East Berlin, *Handball*, meaning both the teamgame and the ball it is played with, gained currency in German around the year 1900.² If we consider the fact that French has borrowed *hand-ball* from German (cf. *Grand*

Larousse de la langue française, Tome troisième, p. 2373. Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1973), we can fairly safely suppose that the inconsistent usage in present-day English illustrated above is the result of borrowing either the German or the French word (or perhaps both). The centuries-old English word *handball* has recently acquired a loan-homonym, and it seems that, at least in North America, there is a tendency to dispell the ambiguity caused by the new word by appending the attributive word *team* to it.

3. The appearance of team handball on the scene of English-speaking peoples' physical education and sport has resulted in a considerable body of new English words, phrases and meanings. English team handball terminology is still in the making, as testified, among other things, by the fact that at the September 1978 meeting of the International Handball Federation in Iceland 'The U.S. asked for better translations, in English, of rules, publications, etc.' (thus a 2). The team handball terms to be presented here have been checked against *Webster's Third, 6,000 Words*, *OEDS* and *Webster's Sports Dictionary*.

A number of well-established English sporting terms have come to be used by team handballers as their meaning was general enough to allow their use in this new sport as well. The following is but an illustrative list comprising such terms with citations. The meaning definitions of these terms as given in *WSD* are adequate for team handball too. Some entries, however, could be added the label *team handball* in

conformity with the general principles of WSD.

CORNER-THROW n Park 57 "If the ball was last touched by a defending player and travels across the goal-line outside the goal or over the goal, a corner-throw is awarded to the attacking team."

FAST BREAK n Abrahamson 539 "Just as in basketball the fast break, when properly utilized, becomes a potent offensive weapon."

FREE-THROW n Park 59 "Free-throw is taken from the point where the violation occurred."

PARRY vt OCSG 461 "When the goal-keeper, after parrying a shot at goal, makes a 'throw-off'."

PENALTY THROW n NEB "Penalty throws at goal are awarded for more serious infractions."

SCREENING n Park 33 "Effective screening (similar to that used in basketball) is a key to the success of most offensive patterns in team handball."

TOUCH-LINE n Park 50 "The Boundary Lines on the long sides shall be termed the Touch-lines."

ZONE DEFENSE n Park 29 "When playing a 6-0 zone defense all players must keep their hands up."

In some cases English words/phrases have acquired new meanings in team handball, not yet recorded in the four dictionaries mentioned above. Examples:

CHASER n Defensive player playing in the center at about 8 m from the goal, trying to intercept balls and break

up passing lanes Park 30 "The chaser attempts to intercept balls passed in the front court."

CIRCLE *n* See *GOAL-AREA LINE* *thusa* 4 "Our new offensive plays had been designed by Coach Stan to find openings on the circle."

FEINT *n* Threatening motion to score before passing to a teammate Park 55 "A player shall not ... execute a dangerous feint by moving the ball towards the opponent."

GOAL-AREA LINE *n* Line drawn in front of the goal at a distance of 6 m, measuring 3 m, and two quarter-circles with a radius of 6 m from the back inside edges of the goal-post *OCSG* 462 "This applies only to overstepping the goal-area line during an attempt at throwing for goal."

HANDBALL *n* Team handball Park 64 "COURT PLAYERS: Members of the handball team actually playing on the court except the goalie."

HANDBALL PLAYER *n* See *TEAM HANDBALLER* *thusa* 5 "The National Sports Festival ... enhanced the sport of Team Handball. I noticed that almost every handball player ... took the time to explain and answer the many questions the fans had."

JUMP-SHOT *n* Shot on a handball goal made by releasing the ball at the height of a jump Park 42 "The offensive players will move to an open area towards the goal ready to receive a pass and shoot a jump-shot."

LOB *vt* Throw the ball in a soft high arc Park 16 "When the goalie comes out to challenge, the offensive player lobs the ball over his head into the goal."

THROW-IN *n* Method of putting the ball into play in team handball after it has passed the touch-line Abrahamson 541 "If the entire ball crosses the sideline on the ground or in the air, the play shall be restarted by a throw-in."

TWISTER *n* See **SIDE THROW**

In two instances the present writer has noticed incorrect definitions in *WSD*. According to *WSD*, the *free-throw line* is 'no closer than 3.5 meters (8 feet 3 inches) to the goal area' and the referee might choose to 'roll the ball along the ground' in executing a *referee's throw*. The following citations from the Official U.S. Team Handball Rules (Park 50-63) clearly show that neither definition is tenable.

FREE-THROW LINE *n* Park 50 "The Free-Throw Line shall be drawn as an interrupted line, parallel to the goal-area line, with an additional distance of 10 feet (3 m)."

REFEREE'S THROW *n* Park 60 "The Referee shall bounce the ball vertically on the point where it was when play was interrupted."

Compounding has proved the most prolific means of creating new terms to designate elements of the game of team handball. While by no means intended to be exhaustive, the following glossary is presented to show how English team handball terminology has been emerging.

BACKCOURT PLAYER *n* Field player other than the circle runner(s) and the wing players Abrahamson 542 "The backcourt

players are generally the most adept at ball handling and are the strongest and most accurate shooters."

BODY AND HAND CHECK n Checking an opponent by using the upper part of the body and the hands Abrahamson 542 "The defense shifts as a unit with the ball and attempts to prevent the offense from obtaining a clear shot on goal by using 'body and hand' checks."

CIRCLE RUNNER n Offensive player other than backcourt players and wing players Abrahamson 542 "The circle runner (CR), like the center in basketball, moves with the movement of the ball along the six-meter line and is always an inside threat to score when open."

DIVE SHOT n See *DIVING SHOT* Dwight 67 "The dive shot is executed by diving toward the goal as closely as possible and relasing the ball before contacting the floor in the goal area."

DIVING SHOT n Shot made by a team handballer stretching his body out, directing his momentum toward the goal and releasing the ball as close to the goal mouth as he can Park 64 "DIVING SHOT: A means of trying to score a goal by launching the entire body into the air toward the goal in an attempt to gain more distance."

DIVING THROW n See *DIVING SHOT* OCSG 461 "Various techniques of throwing at goal can be learned, such as ... diving throw."

FALL SHOT n Shot on goal whereby the shooter falls into the goal area after releasing the ball Dwight 67 "In the execution of the fall shot, one foot remains in con-

tact with the floor and the thrower falls into the goal area and releases the ball before contacting the floor in the goal area."

FIELDBALL *n* See **FIELD-HANDBALL**

FIELD-HANDBALL *n* Eleven-man handball played on a soccer field *NEB* "For the 11-man game, usually played outdoors and often called fieldball or field-handball, the playing area is 90-110 m (300-360 ft) long."
(see also **TEAM HANDBALL**)

5-1 DEFENSE *n* Defensive system utilizing five players on the six-meter line and one in the center at 7 to 8 meters *thusa* 4 "Canada's defense was a five-one with the one playing a man-to-man on the back-court player."

4-2 DEFENSE *n* Defensive system utilizing four players on the six-meter line and two out front at 8 m to break up passing lanes *Park* 30 "The 4-2 defense is the most physically demanding."

GOAL THROW *n* See **THROW-OFF** *WSD*

INDOOR HANDBALL *n* Seven-man handball played indoors *Dwight* 47 "The last outdoor world championship was held in 1966 and now only indoor handball is played on an international level."

INDOOR HANDBALL COURT *n* See **TEAM HANDBALL COURT** *OCSG* 462

LOB SHOT *n* Shot in team handball lobbed over the goalie's head into the goal *Park* 16 "*Lob Shot* This shot is often used in a 1 on 1 fast break situation."

NINE METER LINE *n* See *FREE-THROW LINE* jayfro "The ball is put into play from the nine meter line and closest to the point of infraction."

OUTSIDE SHOOTER *n* Offensive player who takes shots on goal with the defense between the goal and himself Park 29 "The 6-0 defense is vulnerable against a team which has strong outside shooters."

PENALTY LINE *n* See *SEVEN-METER LINE* jayfro "Penalty Shot: Taken from the penalty line (seven meters from the goal)."

PENALTY MARK *n* See *SEVEN-METER LINE* NEB "Penalty throws ... are taken from a penalty mark just outside the circle and directly in front of the goal."

PENALTY SHOT *n* See *PENALTY THROW* 6 "Eddie Cavenie ... dominated the championship game, scoring five goals - three on penalty shots - including the game-winner."

REVERSE SHOT *n* Shot executed around the goal area, by bending knees, faking to the normal shooting side, turning and quickly pivoting away from that side, and releasing the ball in a side-arm motion Dwight 67 "The reverse shot is performed when the player's back is toward the goal."

SEVEN-METER LINE *n* Line drawn at a distance of 7 m from the goal as a line of 1 m in length Abrahamson 541 "A penalty throw is a free shot on goal except that it is taken from the seven-meter line with the goalie attempting to stop the goal."

7-METER THROW *n* See *PENALTY THROW* 6 "A player who is taking a 7-meter throw tries to surprise the goalkeeper."

SHOULDER PASS *n* Transfer of the ball held behind the head of the player with the arm cocked to hide the ball from the goalie and make it more difficult for the defensive players to take the ball away
Park 14 "The shoulder pass is the most frequently used in T-H shooting."

SHOULDER THROW *n* See **SHOULDER PASS** Park 15 "This shot simply involves the use of the shoulder throw (pass)."

SIDE THROW *n* Shot in which the offensive player fakes to his dominant side (i. e. the side on which his better hand is), leans to his non-dominant side, then lowers his body and throws past the outstretched arms of the defender
Park 16 "Side throw (twister)
This is a relatively weak shot."

SIX-METER LINE *n* See **GOAL-AREA LINE** Abrahamson 539 "The six court players set up on perimeter approximately twenty feet in front of the goal on the six-meter line."

6-0 DEFENSE *n* Defensive system where all six defensive players are set up on the six-meter line
Park 29 "The 6-0 defense is vulnerable against a team which has strong outside shooters."

TEAM HANDBALL *n* Game, usually played indoors, between two teams of seven players each, using an inflated ball on a rectangular playing court having a goal at each end
Park ix "Team Handball may be played indoors or outdoors, by children or adults and by both sexes."
(see also **FIELD HANDBALL**)

TEAM HANDBALL COURT *n* Playing court on which team handball is played
WSD 445

TEAM HANDBALLER *n* Someone who plays team handball *thus a* 4
"Mary Phyl Dwight has been a U.S. national team
handballer since 1974."

3-3 SYSTEM *n* Offensive system in which the three backcourt
players are set up at approximately 15 m from
the goal, while the other three court players
comprise the wing positions and the circle runner
Abrahamson 542 "The universal offensive system
used by top teams is the 3-3 system."

THROW-OFF *n* Throw taken by the goalkeeper from the goal area
on to the court via a pass to a teammate, occurring
after the ball has passed over the goal line out-
side the goal, having last been touched by a player
of the offensive team or the goalkeeper of the defending
team in the goal area Park 58 "The throw-off shall
be made by the goal-keeper from the goal-area."

THROW-ON *n* Throw which starts a game of team handball and
occurs at the center-court line after a score
Park 57 "After every goal the team against whom
the goal has been awarded has the throw-on."

2-4 SYSTEM *n* Offensive system in which two backcourt players
are set up at about 15 m from the goal, while two
wing players and two circle runners are near the
six-meter line Abrahamson 542 "Another popular of-
fensive pattern is a 2-4 system in which the center
backcourt player goes inside to the six-meter line
and becomes a circle runner."

WING PLAYER *n* Offensive player playing near the sides of the
playing court Park 26 "The better wing player is
usually quick, agile and a good shooter from the
angles."

N O T E S

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