

From Pass to Goal: the perfect handball attack

The different stages of a successful attack in handball illustrated through philately



« *When we play handball, we represent more than a team; we represent a nation* »

Karoline Dyhre Breivang,

Norwegian International Player

Handball is a dynamic team sport combining speed, strength and strategy.

Aim of the study: This exhibit illustrates the different stages of a perfect handball attack through selected philatelic material. By following the offensive sequence step by step, it highlights how teamwork and strategy lead from the construction of the play to the ultimate objective: scoring a goal.

Structure of the exhibit: the exhibit follows the natural progression of a handball attack, from ball recovery and offensive organization to the final shot and goal.

Rarity: Some items presented are scarce postal documents recorded in limited numbers and difficult to obtain on the philatelic market, a particular effort has been made to assemble them. Material includes postage stamps, first day covers, commercial covers, postal stationery and special cancellations related to handball.

Scarce and uncommon items are outlined in **red frames**.



The ultimate objective: to score a goal

Exhibit plan

1. Scope and methodology of the study
2. Key milestones
3. First handball stamps
4. Ball recovery
5. Organizing an attack
6. The art of passing
7. Movements and ball circulation
8. Feints and deceptions
9. Assists
10. Preparation for the shot
11. Defensive pressure
12. The shot
13. Goalkeeper challenge
14. Scoring
15. Victory and glory
16. The Final whistle

*“The attack in handball is like a symphony:
each pass builds the crescendo to the final shot”*

Dragan Skrbic, Serbian handball legend

IHF technique magazine (2005)

Key milestones in the development of Handball

The first official rules of handball were published in Germany, on October 29, 1917.

The international Handball Federation was officially founded on July 11, 1946.



German Postal stationery, Baden-Baden cancellation 29 October 1917



Cover from Italy with a "Democratice" stamps (first Italian issue after WW2), with Modena cancel on 11 July 1946

First handball stamps

Austria was the first country to issue a postage stamp dedicated to handball.

Released on June 20, 1959, this stamp celebrates The World Men's Handball Championship (Ref MI-1070)



AN UNCOMMON COMBINATION: the 1959 Austrian handball First day cover additionally cancelled at the ASKÖ Federal Sports Festival (Vienna, July 1959) and genuinely postally used to Korea.

Later the same year, Romania issued the second Handball stamp on October 05, 1959 (Michel RO-1805)

Tunisia was the first Arab and African nation to feature handball on a Postage stamp in 1960 (Michel TN-567)



Ball recovery



*This scarce and prestigious 1990 German special color proof officially signed by designers depicts the player in mid-air, scanning for option immediately after **gaining possession** (right stamp).*

The transition to offense begins the moment the ball is secured.

*This 1963 German mailing label perfectly illustrates the fundamental gesture of **ball control**.*



*Modern ball recovery demands extreme reactivity. This 2007 German issue captures the split-second of the catch "**ready position**"*



*Once the ball is successfully recovered, the attacker must **secure possession** under defensive pressure, and use his body as a shield to protect the ball, Kenya 1988*



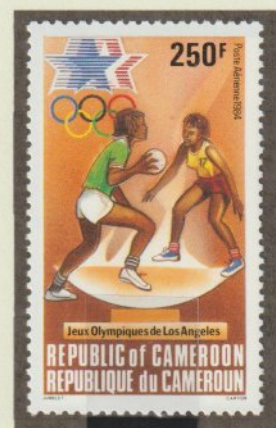
*Recovery must be followed by **acceleration**. This 1969 Togolese issue highlights the "**fast break**" phase, The attacker demonstrates high-speed coordination and ball carrying.*

"Once the ball is secured and protected, the organization of the collective attack begins"

Organizing the attack



Once the possession is established, the team organizes into structured offensive formation. *These stamps from East Germany 1974 illustrate the multi-layered nature of an organized attack: peripheral positioning, central synchronization, and the final penetration phase*



organized play relies on individual duels
Cameroon 1984



Strategic organization culminates in the rapid transition of the ball toward the scoring zone. *The transition is illustrated by This scarce 1979 USSR Registered airmail postal stationery showcasing official and authentic postal markings and arrival cancels (inter-republic usage from Kiev to Tallinn).*

“The success of this organized attack now relies on the final tool of collective play: the art of passing”

The art of passing



Short distance passing: this 1976 Romanian issue demonstrates the tactical exchange used to fix the defense and create gaps



Island 1988, proper arm extension is vital for long-distance passing during fast transitions

Pre-pass control. Perfect ball handling, as shown on this 2009 Liberia issue, is essential for a precise and deceptive tactical distribution



The mastery of ball handling

This 1997 Japanese First Day Cover highlights the technical grip required for professional ball distribution

“Mastering the pass is the first step toward permanent movement and ball circulation”

Players movements and ball circulation



Collective mobility and timing

This 1970 French First Day Cover illustrates the synchronized movement of multiple attackers.

Constant ball circulation forces the defense to react and reposition, creating vital tactical gaps



Global perspectives on mobility: These issues from Vietnam (1980), Angola (1996) and Canada (1976)

highlight the athletic requirements of ball circulation. Whether through explosive

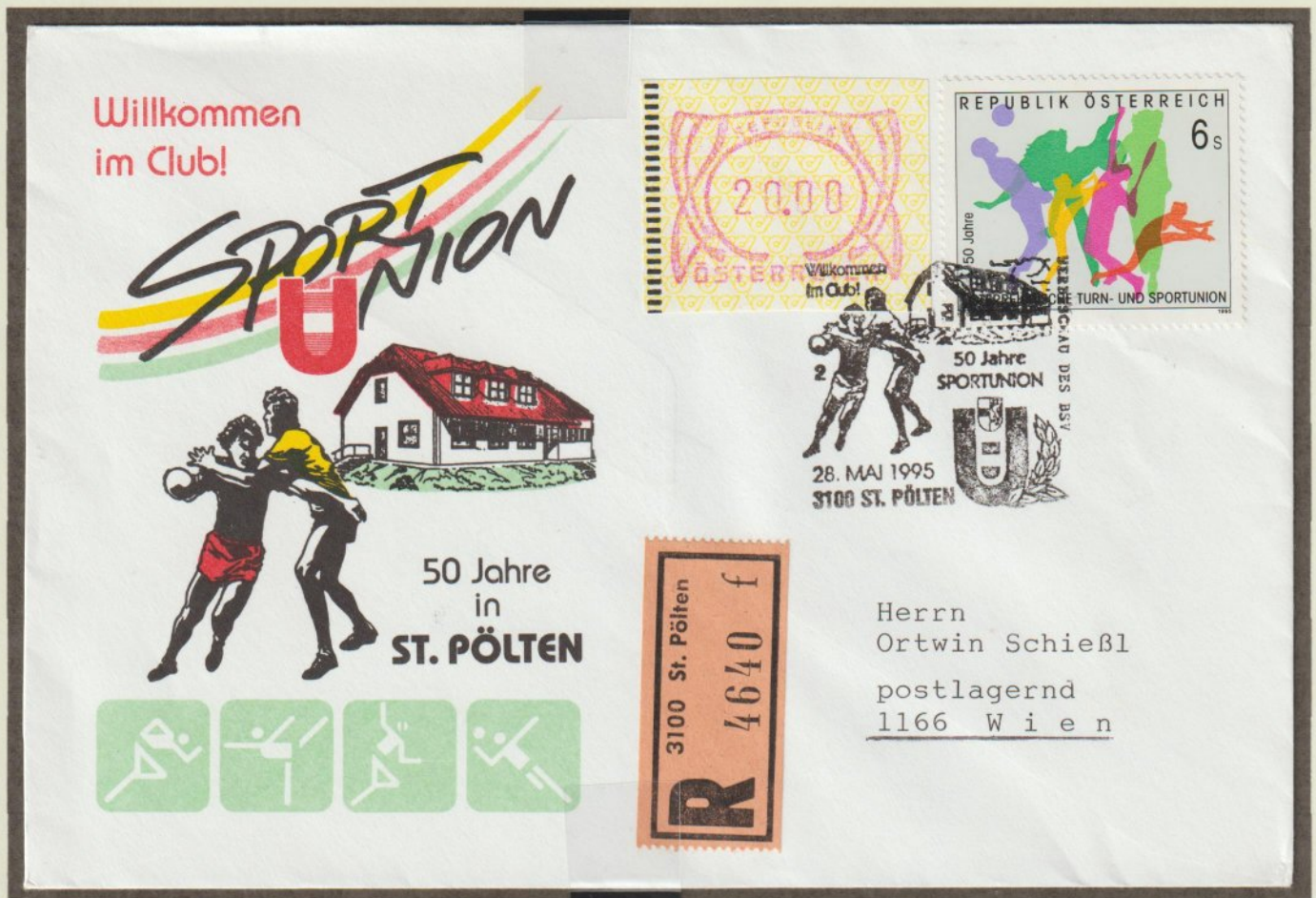
speed or tactical repositioning, players must maintain constant movement to stretch the defensive line



Romania 1975: Phases of ball circulation from the Initial gap creation to the rapid displacement of the defensive line.

“This constant flow opens the way for individual feints and deceptions”

Feints and deceptions



The physical duel: *this 1995 Austrian registered cover highlights close contact between attacker and defender.*



Hiding the intent, *Croatia 2003*

Masking the ball with the body, the attacker prevents the defense from anticipating the next move



Deceptive handling, *Iceland 1993*

Rapid hand movements are used to simulate a pass, forcing the defender into a wrong reaction



Body feint and imbalance, *Croatia 1992*

The attacker uses a lateral feint to bypass the defender



Deceptive passing, *Slovenia 2004*

Creating visual confusion for the defender

“Once the defence is deceived, a final decisive pass creates the perfect scoring opportunity”



Registered priority letter from Egypt to Algeria 2024:

Just as this registered letter ensures guaranteed delivery,
an assist ensures the ball reaches directly into the hands of the striker

“From delivery to execution, the assist sets the stage for the final drive to goal”



Denmark 2003: scanning the field

The playmaker's vision is the first step of any assist

“A great pass is the beginning of a great goal”

Talant Dujshebaev,

Legendary Russian/Spanish playmaker



South Korea 1975

In world class handball, an assist is often created by a **fixation**, the playmaker draws the defender out of position to create a gap for the teammate

Preparation for the shot



Romania 1987: the critical window

Between receiving the assist and releasing the shot, the attacker must maintain perfect body balance in the air

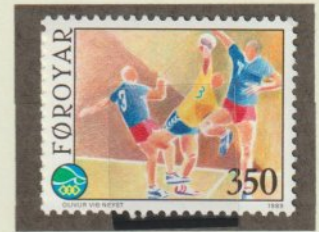
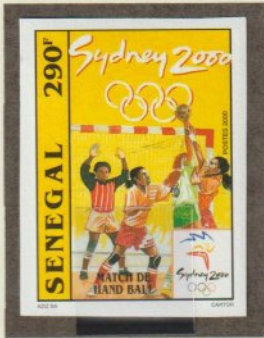


Registered airmail postal stationery sent from Russia to Estonia in 1980 with special RARE METAL POSTMARK,

One of the very few recorded metal hand-cancellations used during the Moscow 1980 Olympic period. According to “the journal of Sports Philately 1984” steel postmarks are less encountered and considered a specialist field of study.

“From the precision of the jump to the power of the physical confrontation”

Defensive pressure



The defensive response to the attacker's progress is manifested through various levels of physical engagement: *From the verticality of the defensive wall (Senegal, 2000), to the lateral containment and 'sandwiching' of the shooter (Guinea-Bissau, 1984), and finally the intense body-to-body struggle to close the shooting angle (Faroe Islands, 1989)*



Belgium 1998, registered cover with multiple pictorial "Dathus" postmarks

It highlights the intense physical contact in handball and the defensive pressure inherent in the Sport's high level competition

"Having overcome the defensive pressure, the attacker is now free to execute the final shot"

The shot



Maximum card from Austria 2020; the culmination of the offensive effort

It showcases the **Jump Shot**. By releasing the ball at the highest point of the jump, the attacker maximizes the angle and power against the goalkeeper. On the card: **Viktor Szilagyi**, Legendary Austrian playmaker.

Poland (2016): the moment of execution

This First day Cover provides a visual sequence of the shot. The main stamp displays the moment while the ball is leaving the hand, the precise moment where all technical preparation and athletic effort culminate in the final goal attempt



Upper Volta (1984) : the shooting sequence:

This stamp illustrates the decomposition of the movement. From the final step to the full extension in the air, it highlights the technical fluidity required to transform kinetic energy into a powerful shot.

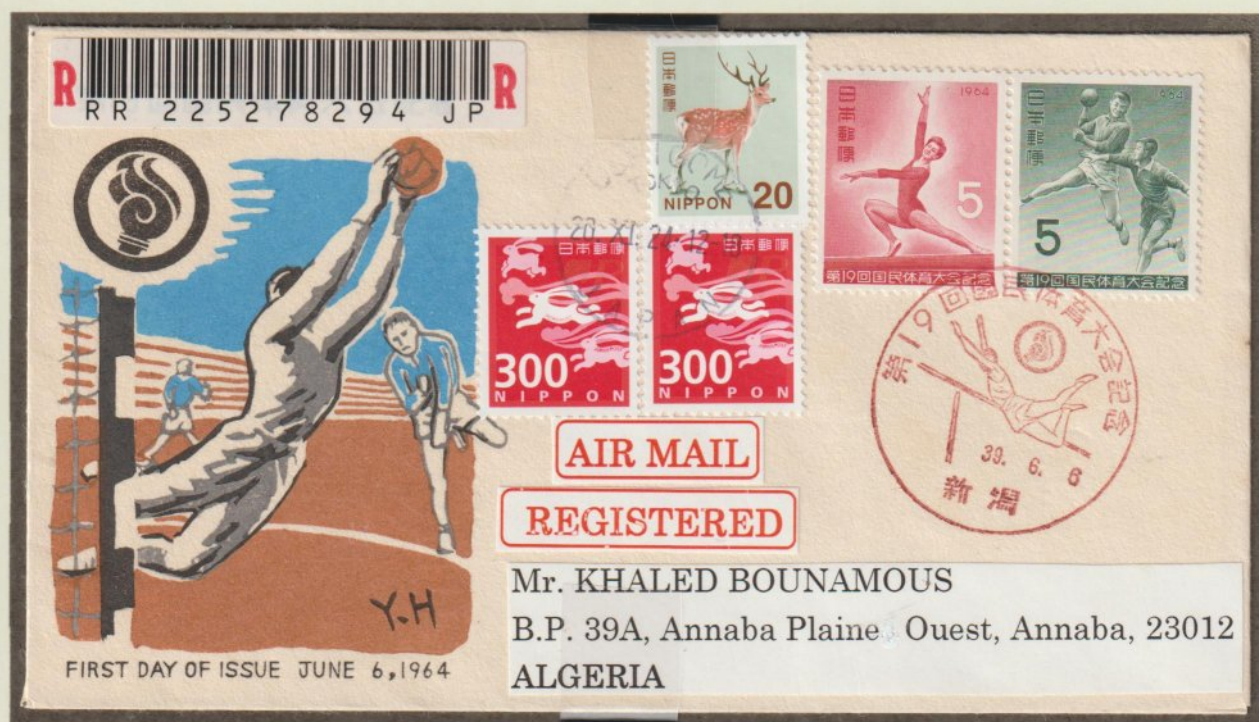


“Once the ball is released, the ultimate barrier is the goal-keeper”

The goalkeeper challenge



The final outcome of the offensive phase depends on the duel between the shooter and the goalkeeper: from the explosive ‘star-save’ seen on the Bosnian souvenir sheet to the acrobatic flexibility showcased by New Caledonian stamp. While the Italian and Egyptian issues highlight the psychological battle and positional anticipation required to close down shooting angles. In the Ivory Coast stamp, the goalkeeper reduces the shooters angle by closing the window of opportunity.



Japan 1964, First Day Cover reused as registered mail to Algeria in 2024: the evolution of the save

The modern reuse as registered mail bridges sixty-two years of sporting history

“Overcoming the final barrier marks the transition to the triumph of the goal”

Scoring



Germany 1997 commercial cover features a special and uncommon commemorative meter flame for the Women's World Handball Championship, the design shows the ball crossing the goal line.



Czechoslovakia, 1990 FDC, the illustration focuses on the ball hitting the back of the net.

“From the final strike of the ball to the eternal summit of victory and glory”

Victory and glory



PR Congo, 1980: African Champions, Scarce Deluxe Proof (non-perforated prestige printing), very limited edition.



Spain, 2013 World champions, Souvenir sheet

Celebrating the victory on home soil



Croatia 1996 official souvenir card, pictorial postmark commemorating the first Croatian gold in Atlanta

“From tactical dominance to the podium: the golden reward of offensive excellence”

The Final Whistle



Switzerland, 1963: the roots of the game, a scarce special postcard "Sonderpostkarte"

with a pictorial flamme from Basel. It commemorates the historical "field handball" era, showcasing the global expansion of the game through a circle of competing nations.



Sierra Leone, 2025: the modern game

A pair of contemporary issues

highlighting the focus of the attacker.



Romania, 1989: cultivating the future, early tactical

development through children's games to ensure sport's longevity.

"When the final whistle blows, tactics fade into history, but the glory of the goal remains eternal".