



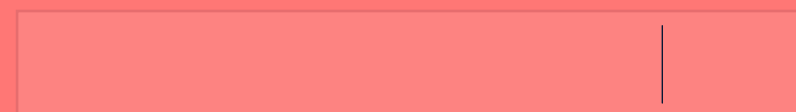
MEN'S EHF EURO 2026

DENMARK · SWEDEN · NORWAY
15 JANUARY – 1 FEBRUARY

EHF
COMPETENCE
ACADEMY &
NETWORK

MEN'S EHF EURO 2026

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS



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INTRODUCTION

The Men's EHF EURO 2026 qualitative summary provides an analysis of the performance of the 24 competing teams and their players who competed at the tournament between 15 January and 1 February 2026 in Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

The analysis focuses on proving increased visual aids for coaches to be able to put the knowledge gathered into practice. It covers coaching, tactical, and technical elements. Throughout this analysis, you can find links to selected clips from the Men's EHF EURO 2026 by clicking on the video symbol. The software 'My Handball System' was used for the graphics.

Further information about the event, as well as full team and player statistics, can be found on the official Men's EHF EURO 2026 website (<https://ehfeuro.eurohandball.com/men/2026/>).

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TOURNAMENT — FACTS & FIGURES

- 24 teams competed at the Men's EHF EURO 2026
- 65 matches were played over the course of 18 days
- Spain vs Serbia and France vs Czechia were the official opening games of the EHF EURO 2026
- the speed of matches is increasing, especially in the preliminary and main rounds
- Denmark, Iceland, Germany and Croatia competed together in the final weekend
- Germany returned to the EHF EURO final after 10 years
- Iceland returned to the EURO semi-finals for the first time since 2010
- 2022 European champions Sweden missed the final weekend, but played the 5/6 placement match against Portugal
- Portugal achieved their best EURO result ever, finishing fifth after beating Sweden
- the 2024 European champions France finished seventh
- 4,046 goals were scored; Denmark's Mathias Gidsel was the top scorer with 68 goals from 95 shots, an efficiency of 71.6 per cent
- Gidsel was also second in the assist rankings, with 56 in total
- Iceland's Gísli Kristjánsson delivered the most assists: 62 in nine matches, an average of 6.89 per match
- goalkeepers Andreas Wolff (GER, 91 saves from 285 shots, 31.93 per cent); Emil Nielsen (DEN, 80 saves from 258 shots, 31.01 per cent) and Viktor Hallgrímsson (ISL, 77 saves from 296 shots, 26.01 per cent) made the most saves
- Germany's Miro Schluroff produced the fastest shots at 134.28 km/h. Francisco Costa (POR) was second with a shot of 132.26 km/h
- Croatia's Ivan Martinović made the most passes, passing the ball 1,377 times and receiving it 1,364 times in nine matches



TEAM PERFORMANCE — BRIEF OVERVIEW

- the tournament produced several noteworthy performances
- the Faroe Islands had their first EHF EURO win ever, 37:34 against Montenegro
- Portugal secured a 31:29 win against co-hosts Denmark. It was Denmark's first defeat in Herning since the EHF EURO 2014 final against France, when they lost 32:41
- the loss to Portugal in the preliminary round was Denmark's only defeat at this EHF EURO
- Norway's 39:22 victory over Ukraine was their biggest ever at the EHF EURO
- after their last appearance at a EHF EURO in 1998, when they hosted the tournament, Italy qualified for the 2026 edition and finished 18th
- 10 players from Denmark play for German clubs, including five for SG Flensburg-Handewitt.
- Juri Knorr is the only German player not playing in Germany; he plays for Danish side Aalborg Håndbold
- Mathias Gidsel is the new record holder for most goals at a single EHF EURO tournament, with 68, passing Sander Sagosen, who scored 65 in 2020
- Nikolaj Jacobsen wins his ninth medal as Denmark head coach, since 2019



MATCHES & PLAYERS — FACTS

- on average, the participating players had played 51 international matches, a rise from 45.8 in 2024
- several countries have introduced younger players into their teams: 46 players aged 21 or younger participated in the Men's EHF EURO 2026, representing 17 teams
- overall, there were 1.92 players per team aged 21 or younger
- there was an average of 5.9 players aged 22-25 per team, compared to 3.8 players per team (across 23 teams) in 2024
- there was an average of 6.5 players aged 26-30 per team, compared to 9.3 in 2024
- there was an average of 4.1 players aged over 30 across 23 participating teams, compared to 4.7 players aged over 30 across all 24 teams in 2024
- in total, 435 players participated in the EHF EURO 2026, of which 274 play in foreign countries and 161 players in the domestic league. In 2024, 237 players competed in foreign countries and 211 in their home country
- Denmark was again the team with the highest average number of international appearances (86.9 average, compared to 111.2 in 2024), followed by Iceland with an average of 83.7 international appearances
- Georgia and Montenegro were the teams with the lowest average number of international matches – 19.6 and 29.6, respectively



COACHES

- the number of foreign coaches decreased from 11 in 2024 to seven in 2026, equating to 29.2 per cent of participating teams. In 2022 there were nine (37.5 per cent) foreign coaches active
- three out of four coaches who led the teams competing for medals come from Iceland
- Austria head coach Iker Romero made his debut at a major event
- Sweden's Michael Apelgren was the youngest coach at the EURO, aged 41
- Dagur Sigurdsson is the only coach who has won EURO medals with two different national teams. Besides bronze with Croatia in 2026, he won the gold medal with Germany in 2016



DEFENCE ANALYSIS

More proactive and forward-leaning defenders step up to pressure shooters earlier.
Zonal defence remains foundational, but more aggressive and tailored to specific opponents.

Defence – general aspects

- teams at the Men’s EHF EURO 2026 used a variety of defensive styles
- Germany had the best defensive performance when adjusting for opponent strength and pace, conceding 26.3 goals per 50 possessions
- Denmark ranked second in defence with 26.5 goals conceded per 50 possessions

Defence – tactical aspects

- Most of the teams used a 6:0 zone defence, although with different styles. The defence of the teams ranked 1-4 varied from 6:0 zone to 5:1 and 3:3 formation. Constant and direct one-against-one attacking attempts required the teams to open their defence more, take the initiative and keep the dangerous shooters further away from the goal

- The best individual defenders can be measured by the number of blocked shots and the number of balls they gained in possession. However, other activities such as halting and diverting tackles should be considered as performance indicators when assessing the overall performance of the individuals.

- The top teams used well-adjusted defending pairs who have good cooperation both in the centre as well as on the outside. Cooperation between the two number three defenders, the second and third defenders, or first and second defenders are vital against the short and dynamic attack organisation. When covering the line player, the common and well-practised activity of two “neighbouring” defenders is necessary.

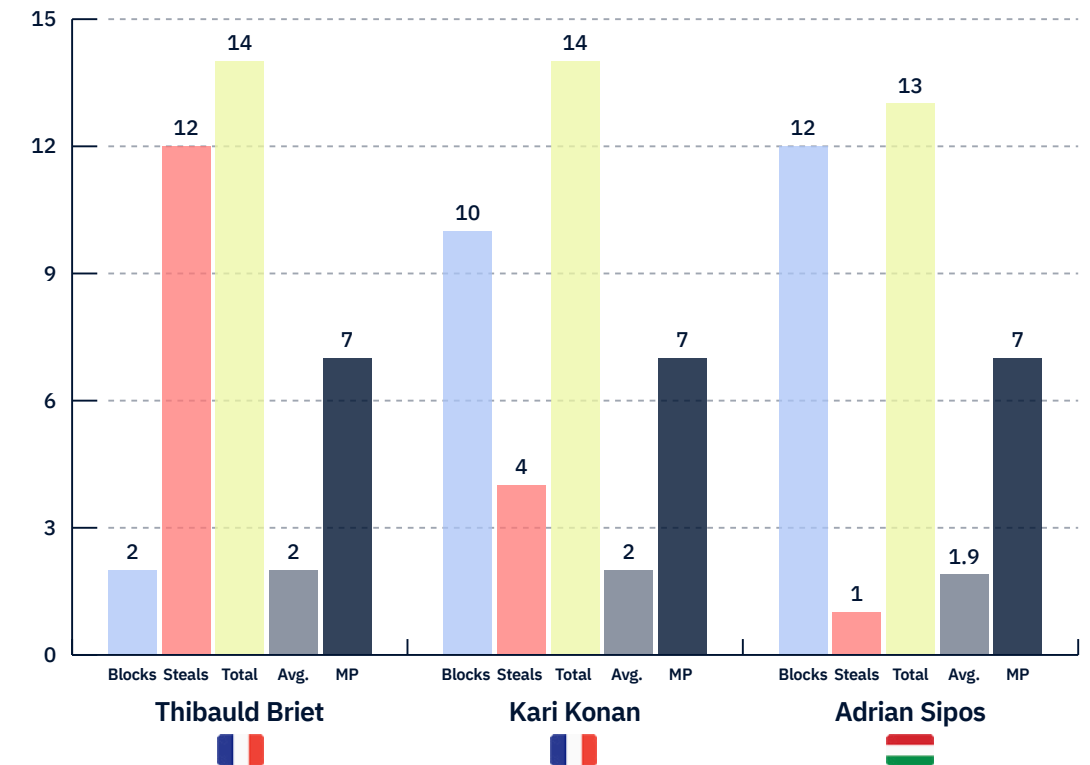
- When defending in positions of numerical inferiority, teams often concede wing space to protect the central areas, leading to more wing shooting opportunities.

Transition attack – defence together with the goalkeeper

- The goalkeepers’ performance was a decisive factor in the teams’ success. The high and increasing saving percentage is due to a shared effort by goalkeepers and defenders: the defenders cover a section of the goal, helping goalkeepers to focus on saving on the other side.
- Successful defence starts with a quick retreat in the transitional phase of the game. The top-ranked teams had very effective strategies in moving back quickly and effectively in order to cover their goal, after losing the ball: running back as quickly as possible to the defending position, disturbing the fast throw-off, crowding around the player with the ball or focusing on covering the pivots when there is an extended fast break.

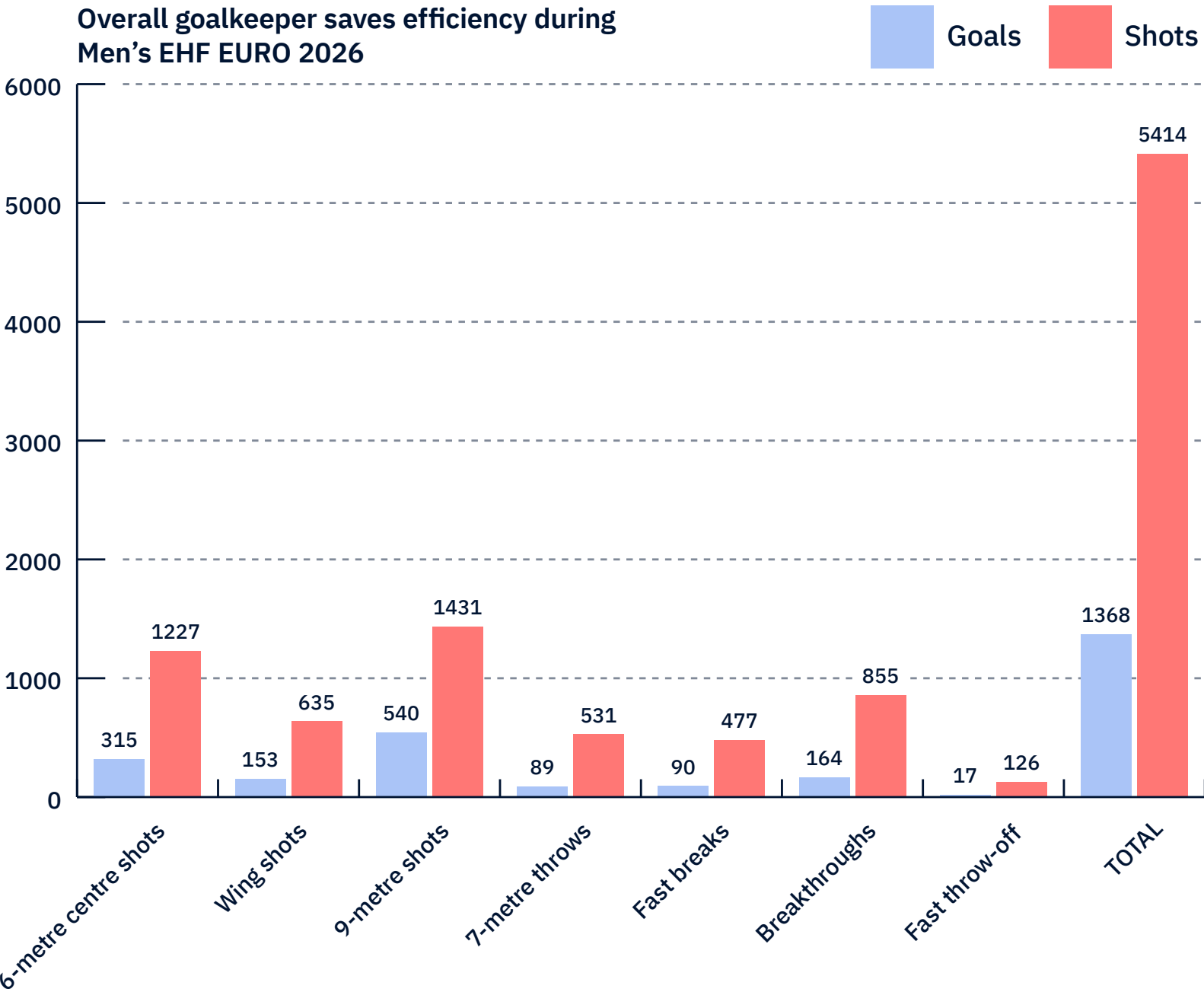
- The average saving efficiency was slightly lower than the EHF EURO 2024.
- Ahead of the final, Emil Nielsen and Andreas Wolff were statistically very close to each other, both with several matches above 35 per cent and both crucial for their teams on the road to the final.
- Denmark’s second goalkeeper Kevin Møller had a decisive role in the final.

Top 3 best defenders

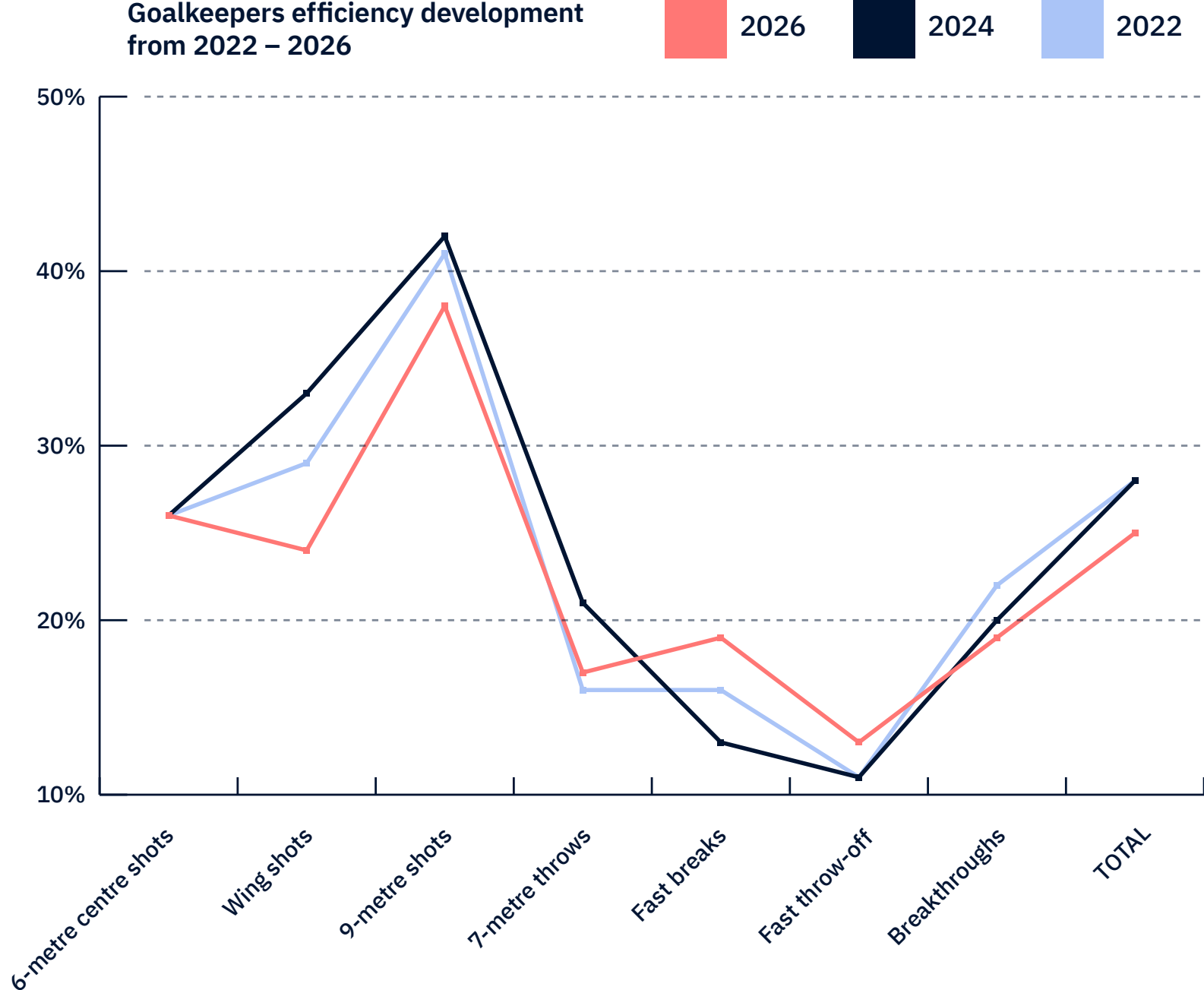


DEFENCE ANALYSIS

Overall goalkeeper saves efficiency during Men's EHF EURO 2026



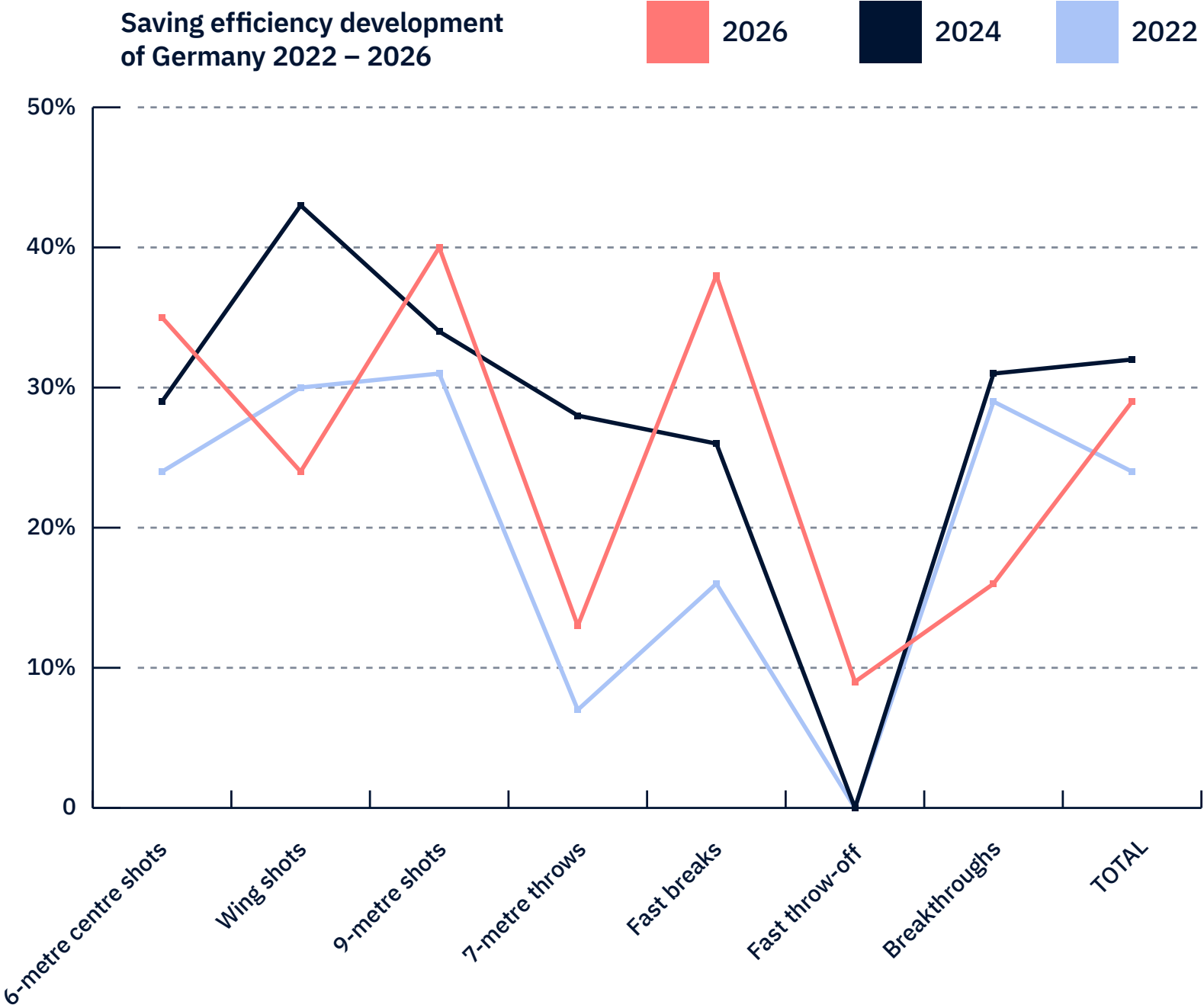
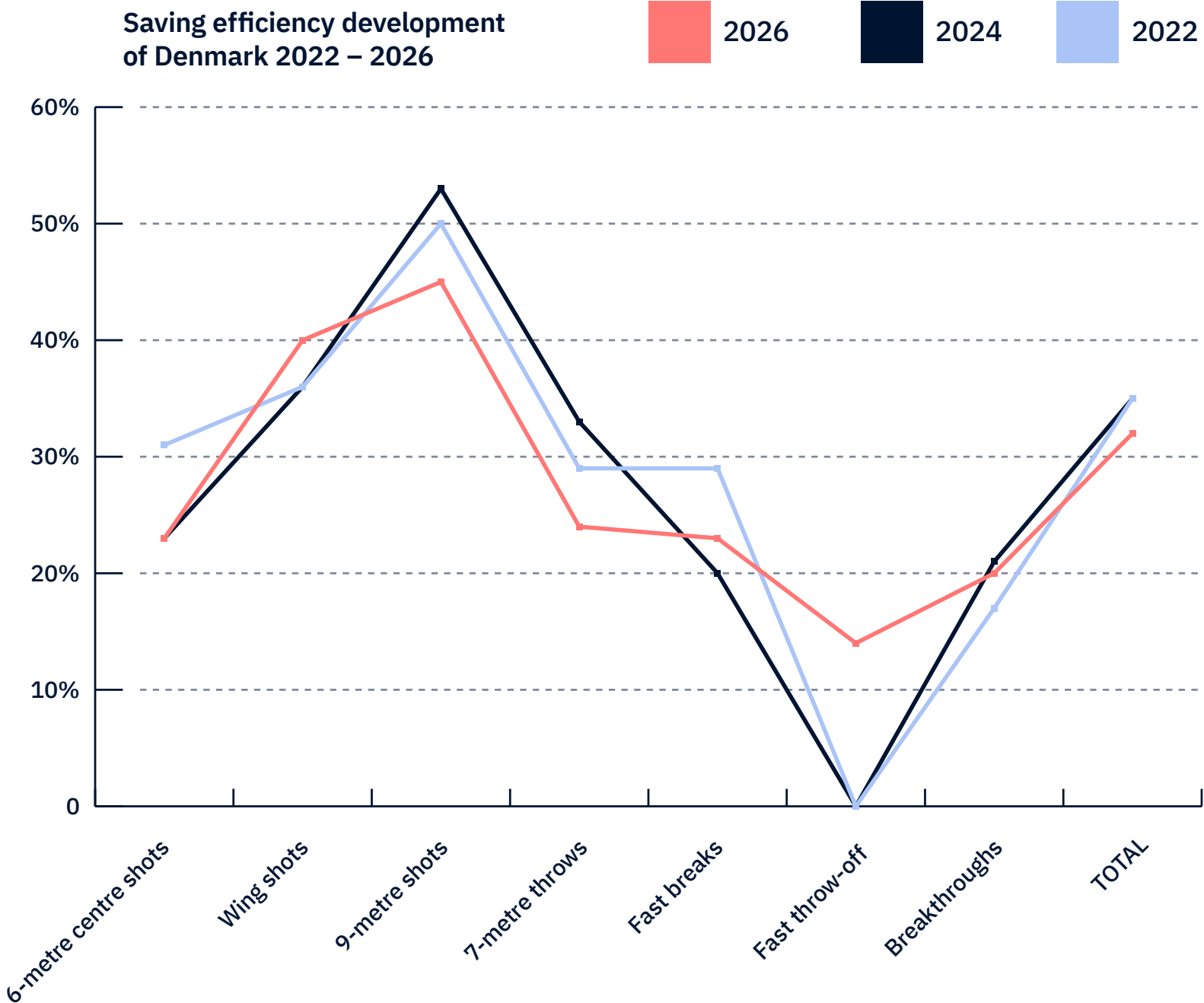
Goalkeepers efficiency development from 2022 – 2026



Total reflects the combined efficiency of saves from all shot positions. Save efficiency is calculated as saves/shots. Data is collected from the entire tournament.



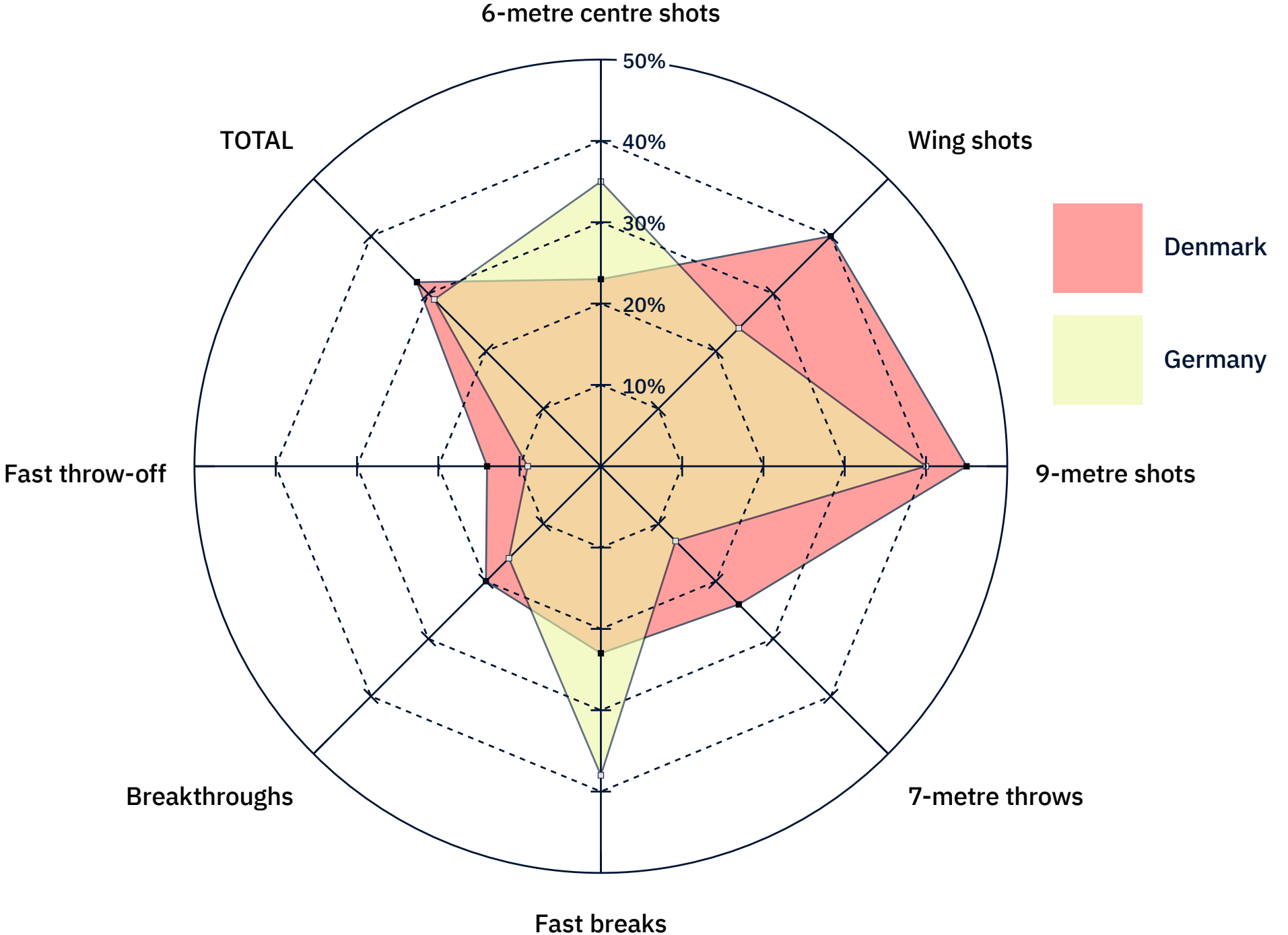
DEFENCE ANALYSIS



Total reflects the combined efficiency of saves from all shot positions. Save efficiency is calculated as saves/shots. Data is collected from the entire tournament.



Goalkeepers efficiency comparison between Denmark & Germany during the Men's EHF EURO 2026



ATTACK ANALYSIS

Teams are pushing for high-tempo handball, quick ball movement, fast throw-offs and rapid transitions from defence into attack to exploit unsettled opponents.

Attack – general aspects

- At the Men's EHF EURO 2026, 4,046 goals were scored from 6,253 shots (65 per cent). This compares with 3,778 goals out of 6,099 shots (62 per cent) at the Men's EHF EURO 2024.
- Denmark had the best offence in the tournament, scoring 34.1 goals per 50 possessions
- at 71.1 per cent Denmark had the best field shooting percentage over the whole tournament; one of the highest field-shooting efficiencies ever recorded at a Men's EHF EURO
- the top scorers were Mathias Gidsel (DEN, nine matches; 68 goals out of 95 shots; 71.6 per cent efficiency) followed by Simon Pytlick (DEN, nine matches; 64 goals/90 shots; 71.1 per cent) and Francisco Costa (POR, eight matches; 61 goals/94 shots; 64.9 per cent)
- amongst the best 10 top scorers were two centre backs, one left back, four right backs, two left wings and one right wing

Attack – technical aspects

- The attackers' repertoire of fakes and shots was extremely varied and highly effective, and this contributed significantly to the teams' success in finishing attacks. Goal shooting from the ground was more common in the attackers' technical repertoire.

Attack – tactical aspects

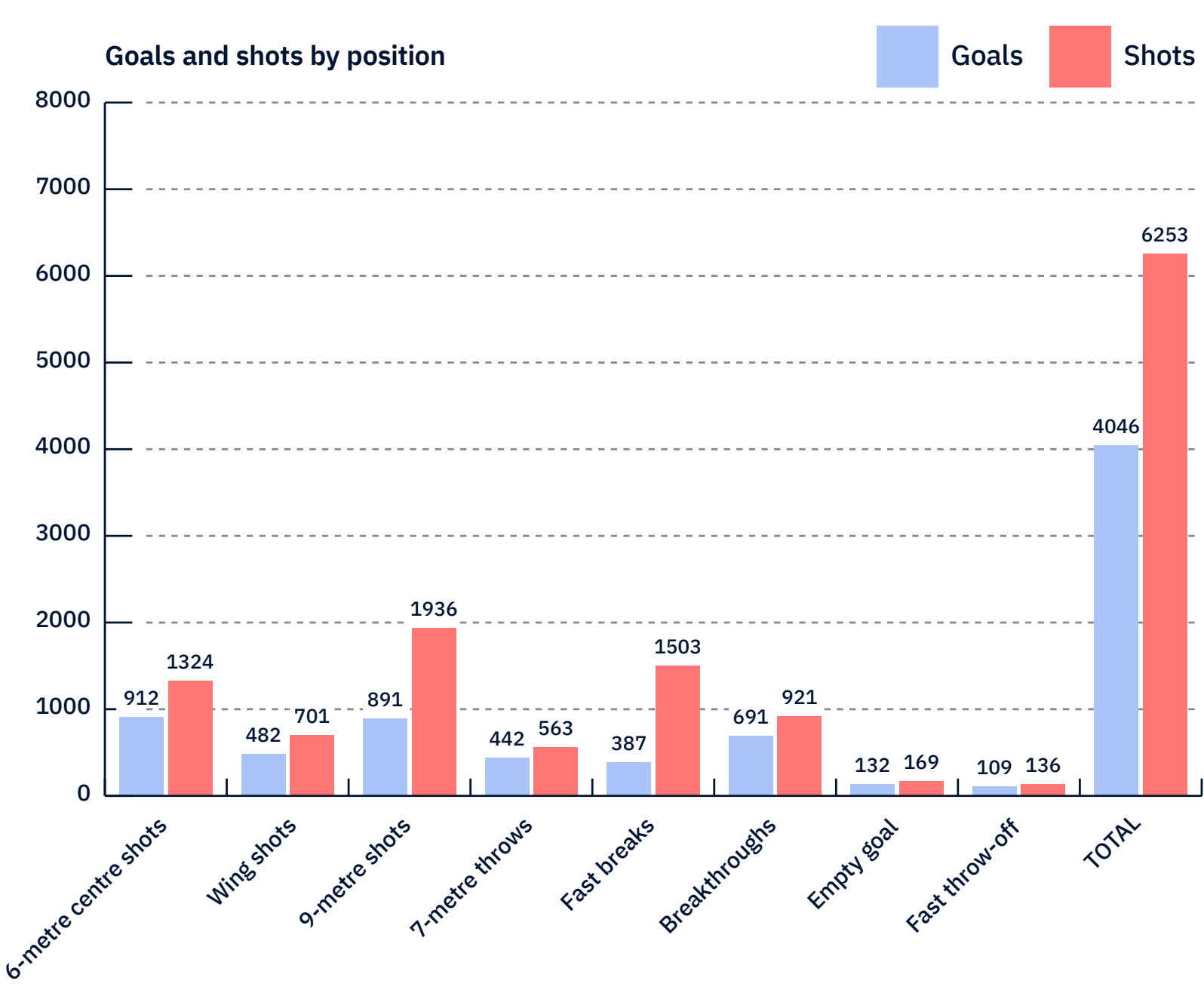
- Against organised defensive systems, teams used two-against-two and three-against-three as a conscious and structured preparatory phase. The most frequently used elements were position changes, crossings and blocking freeing. The attacking play against 2-2 and 3-3 formations was notable for its cooperation with the defenders, with the defenders playing extremely frequently and in a variety of ways.
- The most successful teams operated with characteristic team attack patterns executed with great tactical discipline from the preparatory phase to the finish. The teams asserted their intellectual and positional advantage in the dynamic finishing phase when completing their actions.

Attack transition and attack-defence together with the goalkeeper

- Goalkeepers had a decisive factor in matches and results. After saves, missed shots, technical errors, or turnovers, goalkeepers not only took possession of the ball quickly, but also often left the goal area to speed up their team's counterattack.
- The quick counterattack was based on rapid analysis of the game situation, applying varied technical solutions. Then, the field players finished the actions with high-speed runs and quick passes by exploiting the opponent's mistakes.
- The goalkeepers played a key role in the effectiveness of the fast throw-off. Following gaining possession of the ball, they used a variety of technical solutions to play the ball out quickly (throws from a sitting position, by jumping, while running). Accurate and quick, straight passes ensured the execution of the fast throw-off.
- When the passive play sign is given, the attackers search to earn free throws from the nine-metre line. Taking into account the number of passes remaining, they employed tactical solutions that allowed them to create optimal shooting positions. Quick decision-making and situational awareness played a key role in successful finishes.



ATTACK ANALYSIS

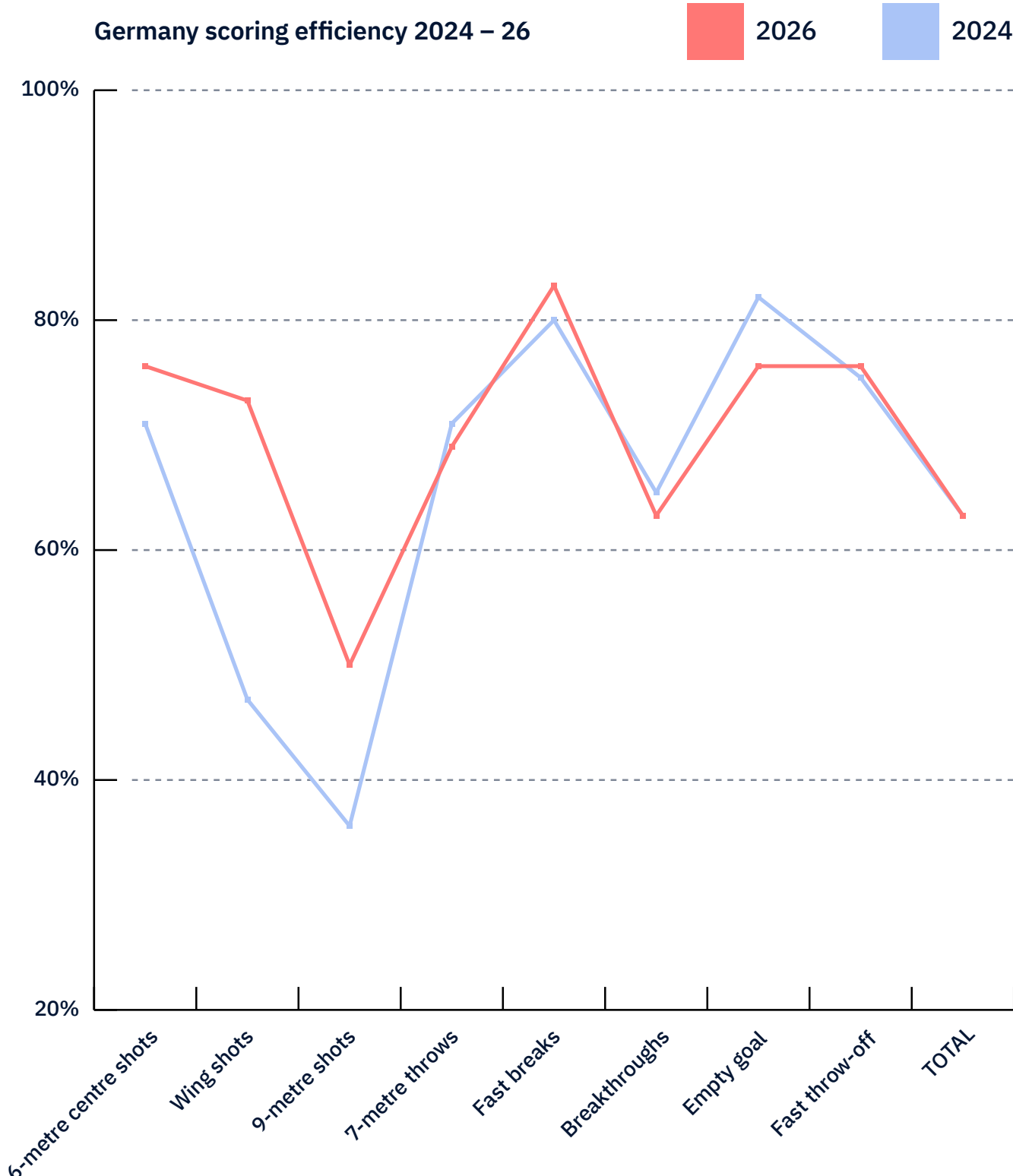


Total reflects the combined scoring efficiency from all shot positions. Scoring efficiency is calculated as goals/shots. Data is collected from the entire tournament.

*no data available for 2022



ATTACK ANALYSIS

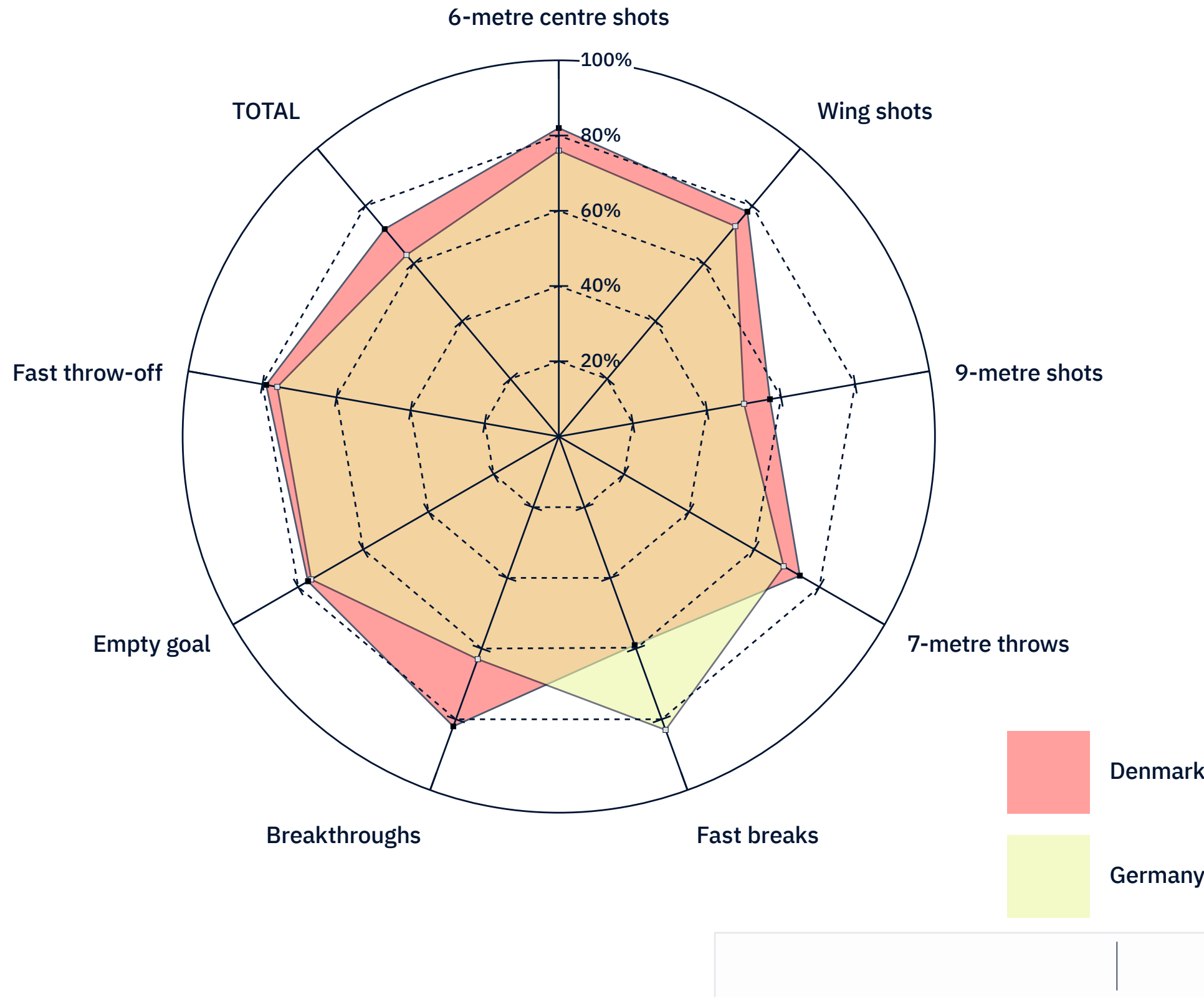


Total reflects the combined scoring efficiency from all shot positions. Scoring efficiency is calculated as goals/shots. Data is collected from the entire tournament.



ATTACK ANALYSIS

Scoring efficiency comparison between Denmark & Germany during the Men's EHF EURO 2026



PROFILE OF THE MODERN PLAYER

Francisco Costa (POR) is a good example of the profile of the modern player. At only 20 years old, he is one of the brightest young talents in world handball; a dynamic right back with elite scoring ability, international honours, and a growing legacy in both club and national team competition.



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE

Launched in 2019, the EHF Respect Your Talent programme promotes the holistic development of talented players both on and off the handball court, addressing topics such as dual career, anti-doping, mental fitness, media, and sports law. During the past years, a plethora of young players have taken part in the programme, after shining in the younger age category competitions. Now, as those players come of age, they impressed at the highest level at the Men's EHF EURO 2026.



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



KRISTÓF PALASICS

Goalkeeper

Age: 23

Matches played: 7

Shots/Saves: 62/206

Saving percentage: 30%

On clear close-range shots he always aims to cover the goal with the largest possible body surface. He skilfully moves his limbs into areas he intentionally leaves open, almost inviting the attacker. Alongside his deliberate saves, reflexive movements also characterise his style when facing unexpected shots.



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



IAN BARRUFET

Left wing

Age: 21

Matches played: 7

Goals/Shots: 21/26

Shooting percentage: 81%

A key figure in both Spain's open and closed defensive systems. He is one of the most active participants in quick throw-off after goals, and against a set defence he is also dangerous when curling in left-back position and shooting from nine metres.



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



JAN GURRI

Left back

Age: 23

Matches played: 7

Goals/Shots: 21/26

Shooting percentage: 63%

His greatest strength is the jump shot, but he can also score from the ground. Joins the team play with excellent sense and timing, and his positioning makes it easy to create scoring chances for him. From six metres he is capable of tricky finishes.



Player Evolution: RYT Camp Attendance



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



ÓLI MITTUN

Centre back

Age: 20

Matches played: 3

Goals/Shots: 23/26

Shooting percentage: 88%

His speed and ability to change direction are remarkable; his penetrations between defenders pose a direct or indirect scoring threat. With feints executed at a low centre of gravity he gets past defenders, who then cannot stop him from scoring or setting up teammates even by fouling. The main organiser of fast breaks, he executes almost all of his shots while diving and delaying.



Player Evolution: MVP & Top scorer M18 EHF EURO 2022, Top scorer M20 EHF EURO 2024



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



RENĀRS UŠČINS

Right back

Age: 23

Matches played: 9

Goals/Shots: 43/75

Shooting percentage: 57%

Agile, springy, and fast, he shoots boldly from distance or after breaking through. Finishing is his main profile, but he can also create chances for the winger on his side or for the pivot. His jump shot is top-class; despite a compact shooting motion, he gives the ball incredible speed and confidently targets the top corners.



Player Evolution: All-star Team M19 EHF
EURO 2021



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



BENCE IMRE

Right wing

Age: 23

Matches played: 7

Goals/Shots: 46/57

Shooting percentage: 81%

It is characteristic of him that, when scoring a goal, he makes maximum use of the free part of the six-metre line with the last two steps of his movement, which he further enhances with his jumping ability. His greatest virtue is his speed, shot variance and shot safety.



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



JUSTUS FISCHER

Line player

Age: 22

Matches played: 8

Goals/Shots: 14/17

Shooting percentage: 82%

Alongside his attacking play, he is one of his team's best central defenders. His specialty is successfully catching the ball under pressure — whether it arrives bouncing or high — then using his physical strength to drive his body over the six-metre line to score or earn a seven-metre penalty. His shots on goal are confident and varied.



PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE



MATTHES LANGHOFF

Best defender

Age: 23

Matches played: 7

A reliable pillar of his team's defence in both sides of the number two positions. He constantly reads the game, stepping forward quickly in depth to take away space for dribbling or faking from his attacker, and he can also reduce the attacker's momentum, because his lateral footwork is noteworthy as well. His stopping fouls are very valuable, as it prevents the opponent from continuing the attack and possibly creating a clear chance later in another area of the court.



CONCLUSIONS

- Denmark win their third EHF EURO trophy after winning gold in 2008 and 2012
- Denmark holds all major titles — Olympic Games, World Championship and EHF EURO — at the same time
- Croatia wins the bronze medal, their seventh medal overall
- both pairs of teams in the final and bronze medal match faced each other in the main round, where Denmark beat Germany 31:26 and Croatia beat Iceland 30:29
- young players are making a major impact on the tournament, contributing goals, shaping games and leading national teams more than in past editions; a sign of stronger youth development and reliance on next-generation talent at the highest level
- there is a focus on left-handed right back players where many teams have good left-handed players in their squad





- faster, more aggressive game flow
- more dynamic defensive structures
- coordinated movements in offence with a multifunctional role of line players and seven against six situations
- efficient transitions remain one of the most decisive tactical factors
- coaches/data analysts are increasingly using real-time data feeds
- the research of real-time data is again crucial to the development of handball because it can modify training methods and help players improve their qualities
- the real-time data provided us with important information on areas such as the top scorers, fastest shots, fastest sprint, number of passes, running distance, and jumping height
- the most important development in the approach to this analysis was the focus on providing increased visual aids for coaches.



VIDEO REPLAY ASSISTANTS

- Video Replay Assistants (VRAs) are EHF EURO referees who also serve as substitute referees during his or her off-court duty. The VRA's objective in relation to the video replay process is to support the review process, and to ensure good communication between the on-court referees and the video replay operator, as well as between the delegates and the operator. The on-court referees are still the most authoritative official during the match. They will always make the final call

• the Instant Video Replay System

Overall

- total number of matches: 65
- total number of video reviews (VR): 83
- total number of matches with VR: 45
- total number of matches without VR: 20
- 70 per cent of matches had VR
- 1.28 VR per match was an increase from 0.88 VR per match during the EHF EURO 2024

Preliminary round: 51 VR across in 28 matches

- 78% of matches had VR
- 1.42 VR per match

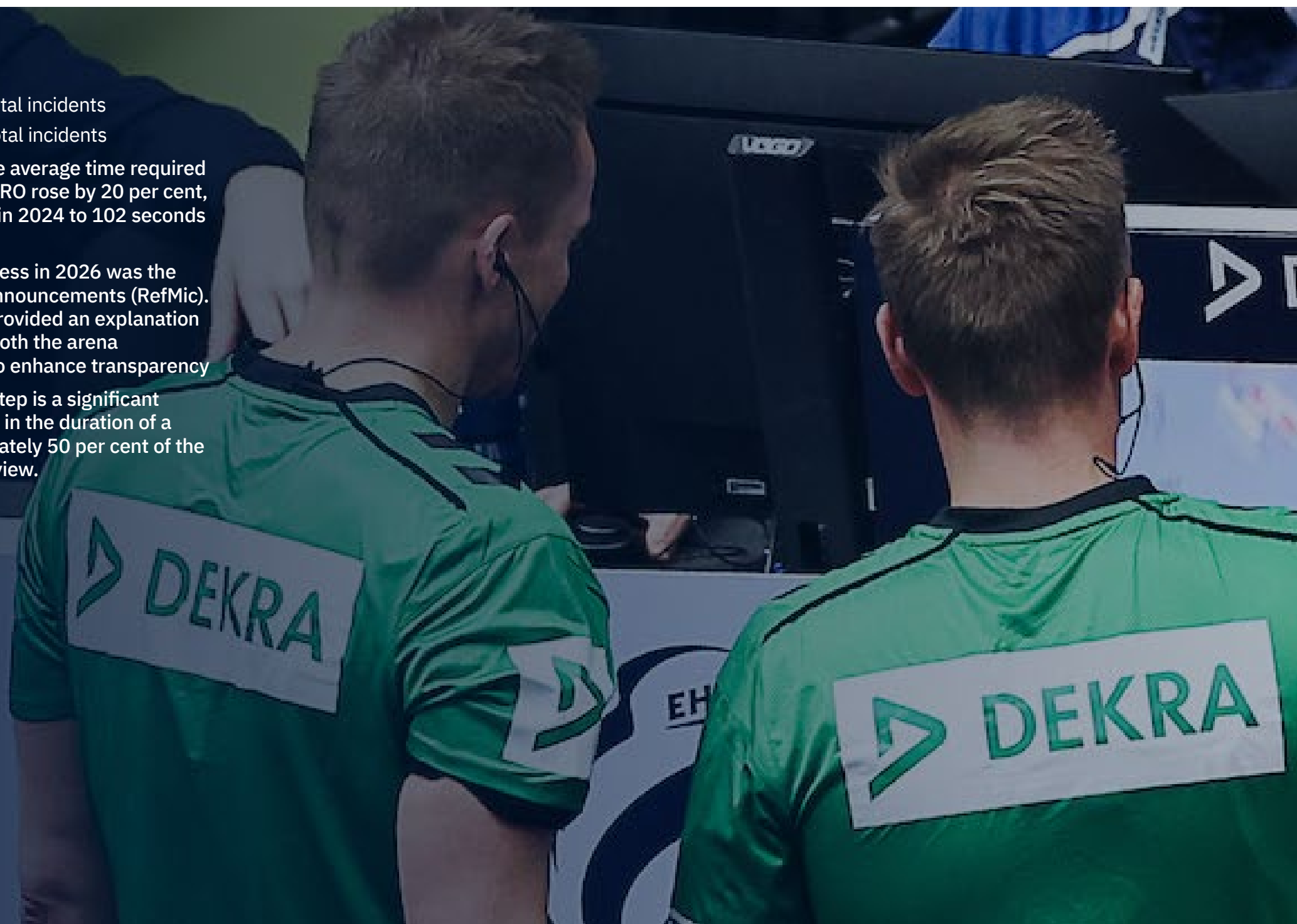
Main round: 24 VR across 12 matches

- 50% of matches had VR
- 1 VR per match

Finals: eight VR across five matches

- 80% of matches had VR
- 1.6 VR per match

- Types of incidents using VR:
 - penalisation (70%): 58 total incidents
 - goal/no goal (18%): 15 total incidents
- between 2024 and 2025, the average time required for a VR in the Men's EHF EURO rose by 20 per cent, increasing from 85 seconds in 2024 to 102 seconds in 2026
- a new feature of the VR process in 2026 was the inclusion of public referee announcements (RefMic). For the first time, referees provided an explanation of their decision directly to both the arena spectators and TV viewers to enhance transparency
- the RefMic communication step is a significant factor in the overall increase in the duration of a VR, accounting for approximately 50 per cent of the additional time spent per review.



ALL-STAR TEAM

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



GOALKEEPER

Andreas Wolf
Age: 34
Matches played: 9
Shots/Saves: 285/91
Saving percentage: 32%



LEFT WING

August Pederson
Age: 31
Matches played: 7
Goals/shots: 49/62
Shooting percentage: 79%



LEFT BACK

Simon Pytlick
Age: 25
Matches played: 9
Goals/shots: 64/90
Shooting percentage: 71%



CENTRE BACK

Gísli Kristjánsson
Age: 26
Matches played: 9
Goals/shots: 34/54
Shooting percentage: 63%



RIGHT BACK AND YOUNG PLAYER AWARD

Francisco Costa
Age: 20
Matches played: 8
Goals/shots: 61/94
Shooting percentage: 65%



RIGHT WING

Mario Šoštarić
Age: 33
Matches played: 9
Goals/shots: 31/39
Shooting percentage: 79%



LINE PLAYER

Johannes Golla
Age: 28
Matches played: 9
Goals/shots: 32/39
Shooting percentage: 82%



BEST DEFENDER

Salvador Salvador
Age: 24
Matches played: 8
Blocks/steals: 4/4
Goals/shots: 23/32
Shooting percentage: 72%



MVP

Mathias Gidsel
Age: 26
Matches played: 9
Goals/shots: 68/95
Shooting percentage: 72%

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