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## The French team's ball-trap in extra man situation

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(Photos: Stephane Pillaud)

In recent years high quality defence work became the trade mark of the French National Men's Team. Either they apply a 5:1 or a 6:0 zone defence formation, the common work of the well skilled individuals is obvious. The core of the team plays together for a long time now, they are well accustomed to each other, playing according to the common concept and displaying the same defence behaviour. However, on their journey to the top of world handball a change of defence mentality can be noticed: - contrary to most of the teams the French team strives to reduce body contact to the minimum, thus to avoid unnecessary 2 minutes suspensions, when in defence. Rather, the players try to keep the attackers under constant pressure, in order to force them to make errors, thus to lose possession of the ball.

This attitude was clearly visible at their recent match against Tunisia, in particular when Luc Abalo moved into the Forward defender's position, following the 2 minutes suspension of a Tunisian player. The French team 6vs5 took the initiative, creating a so called "ball-trap", a kind of strategy in order to influence the decision making of the opposition.



**Picture 1.**

**OL defender S. Honrubia allows the RW to run toward the centre when LB has the ball.**



**Picture 2.**

**#5 RW changes position with LB, while #19 L. Abalo cuts off the CB from the active play.**



**Picture 3.**  
Following the pass, RW moves into the defence-wall and takes position as a Pivot.



**Picture 4.**  
With the ball received from his LW teammate, the LB is isolated and forced to act.



**Picture 5.**  
#19 L. Abalo fakes to mark the CB, offering the area to LB for a long pass to #4 RB.



**Picture 6.**  
With good positioning #19 L. Abalo blocks the path from the LB to pass the ball to CB.



**Picture 7.**  
**#11 S. Honrubia with a good anticipation  
lounges toward the direction of the pass.**



**Picture 8.**  
**Then, he steals the ball passed to #4 RB and  
initiates a fast break immediately.**