

FIH FINAL COACHING SEMINAR

**THE BRIEFING BEFORE THE MATCH:
THE BUILDING OF A PLAYING MODEL.**

Bertrand REYNAUD
FRENCH HOCKEY FEDERATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Before becoming the French Senior Men's Team coach, my formation route allowed me to acquire some scientific knowledge referring to the physical and sport activities. I use these learning in my activities of coach in order to optimize the performance. Among the different activities of the head coach, the « briefing before the match » is a major period. Nevertheless this moment is rarely studied. During the briefing the head coach has to be able to bring clear information to the players according to the strengths and the weaknesses of the next opponent team by means of a photograph of this team. Following this analysis the head coach will give the instructions to the players in order to bring to his own team the maximum of assets for the winning of the match. The aim of our topic consists in presenting the method which we have been using since 2003: the building of an opponent team's playing model.

From 1986 to 1988 I studied the area of the motor powers in the National Institute of Sport and Physical Education. I remind that "the coach's action consist in facilitating the result in the committed processes during the completion of a precise task" (Arnold, 1985). The goal clarity promotes a best understanding of the task by the players. This cognitive phase consists in focalizing the attention on the pertinent signals and in reducing the informational charge.

We suppose that we will obtain a best retention and application of the play instructions by the players during the match.

Our problematic consists in defining an efficient method of presentation of the opponent's playing animation during the briefing, in order to have a more performing team during the match.

2. METHODOLOGY

From 1993 to 1994 I worked in Paris 12 University to obtain an Applied Study Diploma (ASD) in Education Sciences (Sport and Physical Activities option). The theme of my promotion was the reductionism for which the idea is "to be able to understand it is necessary to go down near the smallest and to search the greatest simplicity". That is to reduce the diversity of the phenomena while controlling them.

Example: we try to explain the quality (to evaluate the attack) by the quantity (the statistic data).

During this ASD I studied the systemic approach with the Grehaigne's researches (1989) about Football. The systemic approach permits to consider the game in his totality.

As a team sport, Hockey is a set finalized by a production aim: the winning of the match in a area of regulations while considering:

A ratio of strength

A choice of sensor motor skills

The individual and group strategies.

Further, as was recalled by Metzler (1987), « a match consists in act resolving a greater number of non expected problems in their apparition order, their frequency and their complexity in group and simultaneously. The knowledge promotes the problem treatment. A match is only the evolution probabilities of the attack and defence configurations. This analysis type promotes the notions of opposition and order's management. So Grehaigne (1989) proposes to consider the 2 teams as organized systems. The functioning conditions of these systems first lead to manage with disorder while in preserving some order "or a balance between them" (Mayr, 1974).

According to Walliser (1977) the model notion covers all the representations of a real system. This representation can be mental or physical, expressed under a verbal, graphic or mathematic form. Grehaigne adds: “all the models are a simplified representation and so a system photograph because a universal model which definitively would set all the proprieties of a real system is inaccessible”.

We have demonstrated that our methodological approach of a playing model building is supported by as a scientific approach as empiric.

We will demarcate the study of our systems with the offensive and defensive phases.

Our theoretical area will be the tactic.

To sum up we consider (1) a team as a system. (2) The model is the simplified representation of this system. (3) The model permits to select the pertinent information. (4) This method improves the understanding and the application of the playing instructions by the players. (5) We use the computer tools to give more clarity to the playing instructions.

We use the computer tools to give more clarity to the playing instructions.

We can now interest ourselves to the building of the model.

3. THE BUILDING OF THE PLAYING MODEL

The model building is elaborated from different data.

What data to collect?

As we have clarified before, our model will be narrowed in the area of offensive and defensive animations of the opponent team.

Our theoretical area will be the tactic.

This data are technical, tactical, physical and psychological. We retain the following criteria:

- The circulation of the ball,

- The positioning and the movement of the players,

- The determination of the defence and attack forms of play used by the team.

- The detection of the key players.

How to collect these data?

3 stages can be considered.

The data collection

That is the live observation (during the match) and after the match (by video) by the technical staff. The match sequences will be analysed by using the “Dartfish” software and following several tries we program the following situations:

- Restarts,

- Defence on opponent restarts,

- Offensive actions in the 22m,

- Defensive actions in the 22m.

So we are able to gather all the restarts. Knowing there are nearly 40 restarts per match and a team is observed 3 times before to play it, we have 120 representative restarts of the team. So a photograph of the restarts can be realised.

More, the software will select us the different specific situations.

The “paper – pencil” observation is also a used method in order to be able to record in live the pertinent data:

- The key players,

- The main individual and group actions, etc.

The live statistic data from a sample table giving immediately some information with the timing and the player's identification about penalty strokes, offensive penalty corners, defensive penalty corners, actions in the D, goal shootings, decisive passes. More data can be noted: 1 versus 1 play, balls loss, representation of the attacks for instance.

The data treatment

These indicators are significant and precious. They offer back efficient information. It would seem that it is possible to establish some constants by the mean of ratio (ex.: number of scored goals / number of goal's attempts) permitting us to obtain objective information under the form of a coefficient varying from 0 to 1. All the collected data will be analyzed, discussed and compared. The technical staff gets together and is composed by: the head coach, the assistant coach, the analyst, the physical trainer. That is the time of the decision's making for the head coach. With his assistant he brings the results of their live observations for which the characteristics are strategic, technical, physical and mental. The analyst proposes the sequencing from the built sequences on several matches. The physical trainer gives his opinion about the physical qualities of the observed team.

The data interpretation

From the decisions concerning the playing animations of the opponent, the head coach has to interpret them. He transforms the qualitative and quantitative data in commented graphic representations. He builds his model and presents it to his assistant for validation.

It is evident that according to the importance of the competition, more time will be given to the model building. The collected data prior the competition will promote this preparation. However we cannot ignore that the realized observations during the current competition are a more objective source of information concerning the next opponent team. Observation and analysis of the opponent, model (theory), decision of the playing instructions. Now let's deal with the model presentation inside the briefing.

4. THE BRIEFING BEFORE THE MATCH AND THE MODEL PRESENTATION

During a competition we proceed as following. The day before the match (if match in the morning) or in the morning (if match in the afternoon) we realize the prior - match briefing. It lasts nearly 30 – 45 minutes. It concerns the next opponent's presentation and the playing instructions which come from them. The day after the match (or in the evening if two matches in 2 days) we make a debriefing according to the analysis of the played match and so to the validation or not of the model. This debriefing has to last nearly 20 – 30 minutes. The briefing before the match and the debriefing are regularly accompanied with individual or semi – collective discussions.

We sometimes propose to the players to observe in live or by video the next opponent team but also to analyze by video their own performance from criteria chosen by the coach:

Actions + / Actions - , defensive or offensive PC, etc.

The model presentation will be the key time of our briefing. It is the heart of this meeting and is located immediately after the introduction about the match to play. It is preceded with a video clip commented by the head coach and their assistants.

We will present a short video clip showing the model's use during the briefing.

Our briefings are regularly video recorded and analyzed with an expert from the National Institute of Sport and Physical Education to improve them.

We will illustrate our talks from case studies. The selected models will be the used models during the Qualifying Tournament for the World Cup in Changzhu (China).

5. CASE STUDY.

We present in this chapter the models concerning the 6 played teams during the World Cup Qualifying Tournament in Changzhou: Korea, China, Malaysia, New-Zealand, Japan and Belgium. We propose an offensive model and a defensive model of each team and we accompany it with commentaries as well as the playing instructions transmitted to our team in order to realize the match. During our speech we will present a short video clip illustrating each model.

We can compare each model “in staking” them in order to verify if it’s possible to classify these teams in similar playing styles. This analysis leads us to create under-classifications.

In attack.

A Group: Korea, China and Japan.

B Group: Malaysia, Belgium and New-Zealand.

The A Group is characterized by a short passes playing predominance with a fast tempo based on the semi-collective progressing in the wing channels and a marked research of the counter-attack. Korea demonstrates more high technical and physical qualities. The finition towards the goal is clearly announced: in percussion with preference for Argentina reverse or by a fixation in the depth to continue with a decisive pass. Japan shows a greater capacity to approach the D. A leader is well identified (centre-midfield and captain). China is coached by a Korean and is an in building team.

The B Group uses longer passes play and is characterized by an elaborated ball circulation during the restarts. Influenced by the German style, the Malaysian team plays the restarts from precise positioning. The Kiwis attempt longer passes play in the depth and in diagonal. Belgium progresses in the wing channels and also knows to find a support with the centre midfield. These 3 teams strike into the D by the hand sides: more individually for Malaysia, New-Zealand using more the depth in the D, Belgium looking for the PC. Like Japan the Kiwis possess a playing leader with Archibald.

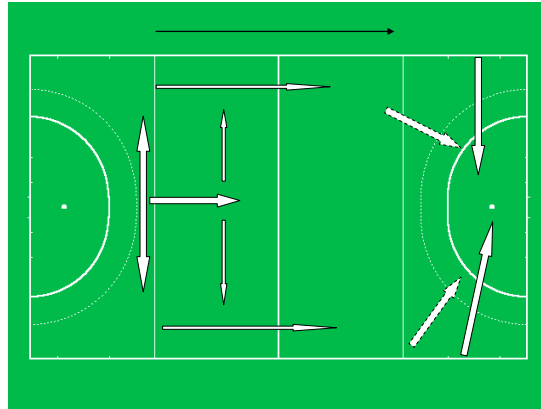
In defence.

A Group: Malaysia, Belgium, New-Zealand, Korea and Japan.

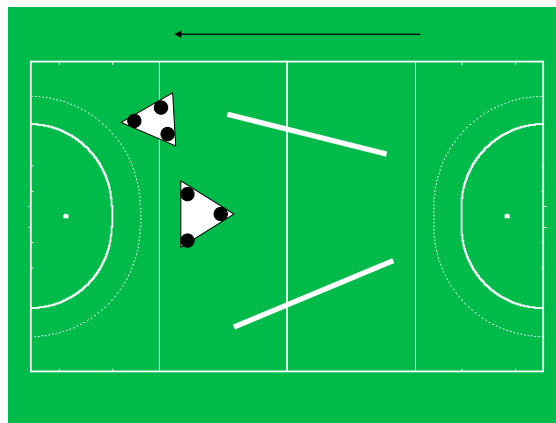
B Group: China.

The A group teams are organized around a half court press with an individual marking on the opponent forwards. The exception of this competition is China who defends with a very low press. Belgium and Malaysia open clearly the wing channels and after that produce the press. Korea and China are organized around the ball with an assistance positioning in order to create the 1 against 2. The Kiwis and Japanese teams are organized with a zonal defence and after that create the density around the opponent.

BELGIUM: OFFENSIVE MODEL



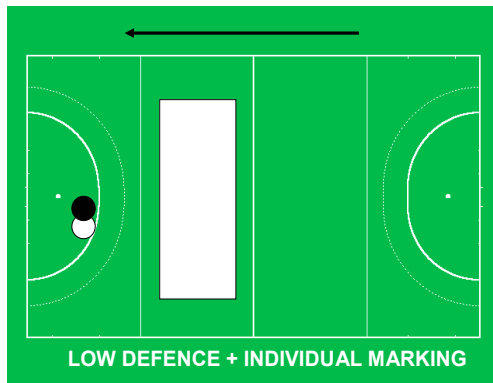
BELGIUM: DEFENSIVE MODEL



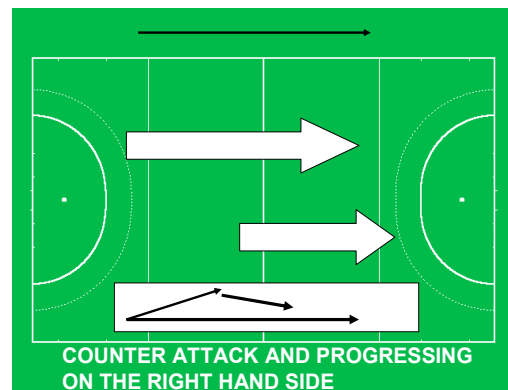
Some instructions

- The Belgium team / We use to play this team and we use to win the decisive matches!
- The mistakes during the prior match / Recall you the « Japanese cemeteries »!
- A play – off match / To keep the self - control and the control on the match.
- The Belgium press / To provoke the press in changing space the faster possible and in initiating the moving with and off the ball.
- To respect this team / That is to contrast our own play.
- To disturb the restarts / To alternate in defence with different forms of press.
- Anti defensive PC plan (Brule) / To defend in front the 22m and to be efficient in the assistance inside the 22m.
- Lack of velocity of the backs / To be efficient on the counter attacks. and to play for the partner.
- To perform successfully a play – off match / To be concentrated on the playing instructions!

CHINA: DEFENSIVE MODEL



CHINA: OFFENSIVE MODEL



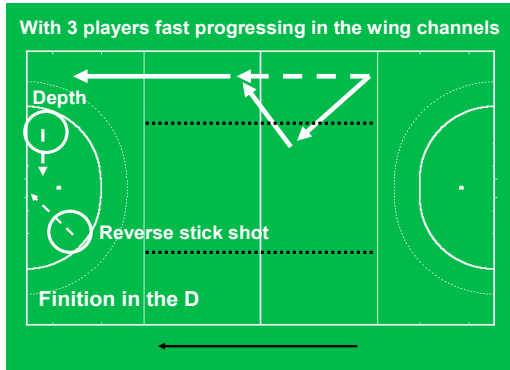
Positive points and playing instructions

- The goalkeeper.
- The n°12
- Explosivity in the first strides / **To defend at the « stick distance ».**
- Counter attack on the opponent's restart / **To be patient, to reduce the distance in front the first line and to give rhythm.**
- Counter attack following the low defence in the right side / **To tackle back + covering + defensive security.**
- Counter attack following the recuperation of the ball on static players / **Moving play**
- Right wing channel / **Closing + orientation.**
- The rebounds on the goalkeeper and around the goal / **Arousal + information taking.**
- Offensive PC + defensive PC / **Confidence in the decision making.**
- Offensive free hits / **Communication, cohesion and « body to body » marking.**

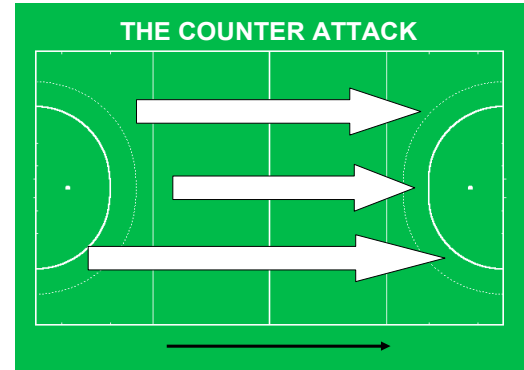
Negative points and playing instructions

- Long passes play / **Interception for counter attack.**
- Under opponent's press / **To vary and to be confident in the press.**
- The left side restart / **To orientate.**
- The defensive 1 vs 1 / **If we play in the spaces and in moving ... always in moving.**
- To defend with opponent player behind / **To play in the continuity.**
- The built attacks / **To intercept for the counter attack (TURN OVER).**
- Physical qualities / **Only if we put rhythm.**

KOREA: OFFENSIVE MODEL



KOREA: OFFENSIVE MODEL



KOREA: DEFENSIVE MODEL



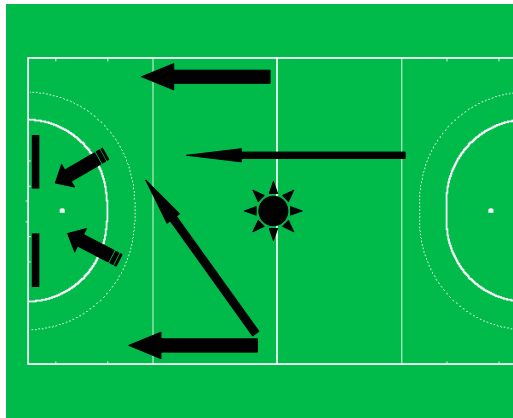
Against the korean style: in defence.

- To prepare the turn – over: to insure a defensive security and a covering with minimum 4 players.
- To break « correctly » the counter attack.
- To organise a low defence / the restart in order to close the spaces and to create the density around the ball.

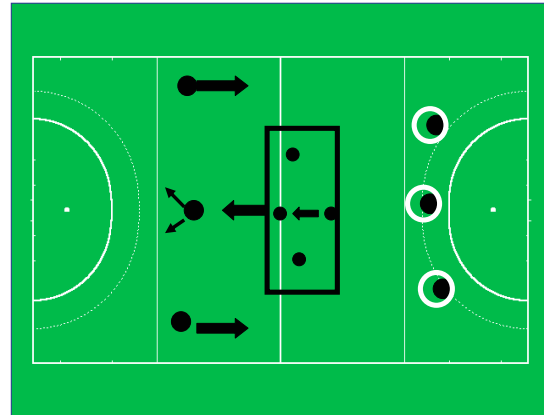
Against the korean style: in attack.

- To be patient.
- To reduce the distances / the first defensive line.
- To play at the efficient distance and in the spaces.
- To change spaces.

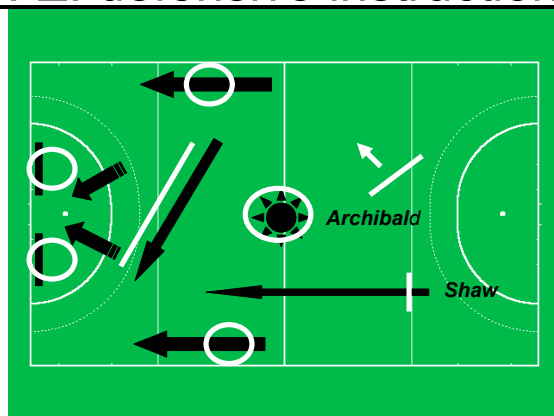
NEW – ZEALAND: OFFENSIVE MODEL



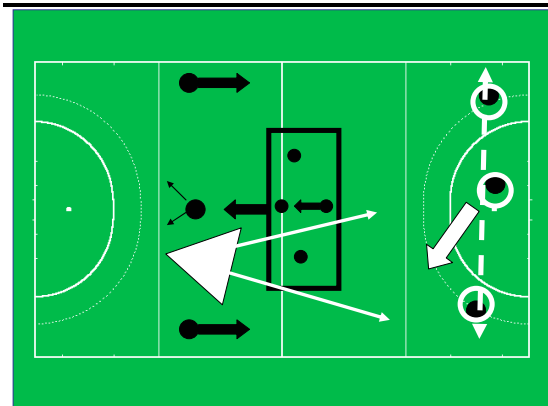
NEW – ZEALAND: DEFENSIVE MODEL



N-Z: defensive instructions



NZ: offensive instructions



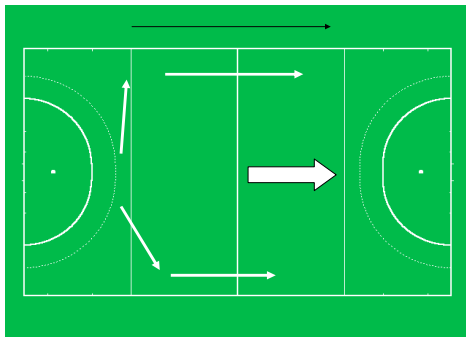
Offensive model / Defensive instructions

- 1 key player: Archibald / **individual marking**.
- Long passes play from the backs and diagonal passes inside the offensive half pitch / **pressing on Shaw and to cut the diagonals**.
- Good use of the depth in the D / **information taking by the backs and the goalkeeper to close the spaces**.
- Penetrations in the D and play in the wing/ **to be successful in the 1 vs 1 and to keep a watch on Burrows**.

Defensive model / Offensive instructions

- Individual marking by the 3 backs / **moves of the forwards to create and to use the spaces**.
- Zonal defence with 4 players: 3 midfielders + Shaw / **to reduce the distance in front the zonal defence in using the « gate » between the forwards**.
- Orientation by the center forward / **to play before his action**.
- Wings closing by the forwards / **no play in the wings at this moment**.
- No covering behind the backs and backs lack

MALAYSIA: OFFENSIVE MODEL



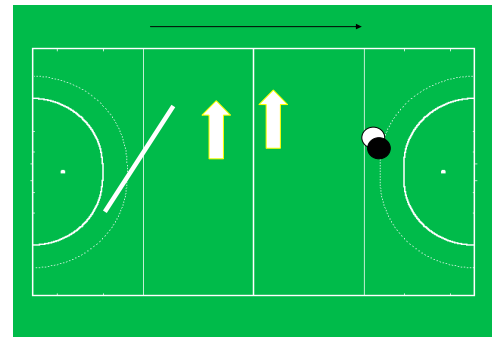
Malaysia: key players

- The n° 3 is able to play right back but he is a powerful and skilful centre forward!
- The n°5 is the captain and the full back (no present during our Malaysian tour).
- The n°7 is an aggressive player and the n°12 is the centre midfield.
- The n° 6 is a very experimented back.

Defensive instructions.

- To maintain 4 covering players for the security.
- To apply a defence – action (in opposite to passive action).
- To read and to decide: lining up –collective action – 1 vs 1 distance and to defend in moving towards – marking with the pertinent action:
1 start – 1 end.
- To reduce the statistic data in defence:
(4 Actions in the D /1 goal attempt / 1DPC per half time).

MALAYSIA: DEFENSIVE MODEL



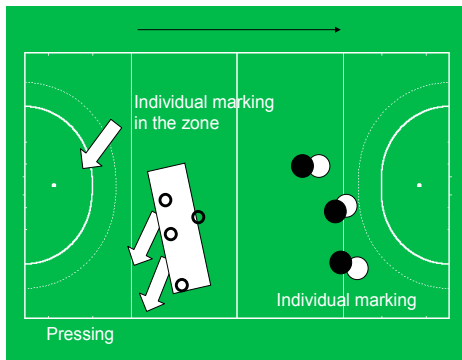
Malaysian team's characteristics

- This team possesses an identified system of play.
- Skilful and tonic players during the first strides.
- They attempt to play 1 vs 1 or 2 vs 1 progressing.
- Scoops in the wing channel.
- Efficient OPC (diversity)
- 2 blocks play.
- Defence – orientation in closing the axis of the pitch.
- This team is able to take the advantage on the opponent weaknesses.
- The sense of the provocation.

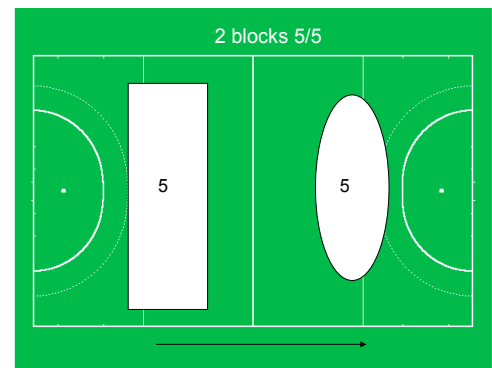
Offensive instructions.

- Opposite moves: permutation / the individual marking by the Malaysian backs.
- To play before the Malaysian's positioning or in the wing channel or in the « gate » (Malaysia will benefit from all the waiting times!)
- Recall you in Kuala how the rythm given by the backs disturbed them.
- To change the spaces in first intention (the opposite scoop is possible).

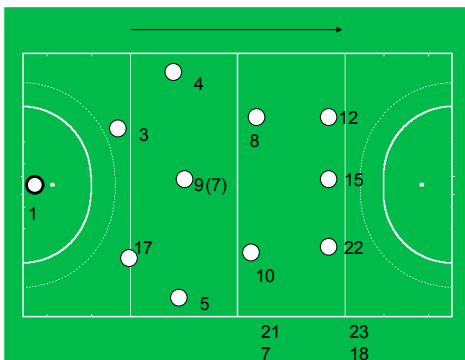
JAPAN: DEFENSIVE MODEL



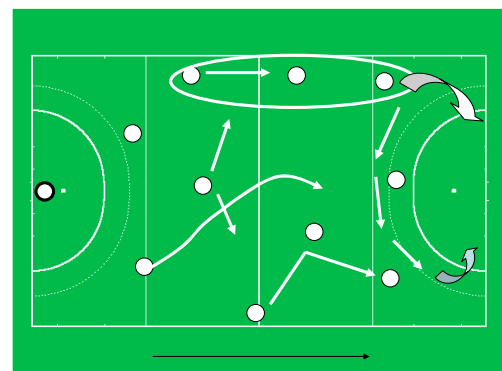
JAPAN: OFFENSIVE MODEL



JAPAN: Playing system and identification of the players



Representation of some players moves and ball circulations



In defensive situation.

- Marking and positioning in order to intercept the ball: close man to man in the zone.
- 1 vs1 skilful players close to the feet but often static.
- Well organised assistance in 1 vs 1.
- Excellent individual pressing becoming collective (press) if success in the orientation.

In offensive situation.

- Fast counter – attack following the prepared interception.
- Possible restart with a very high positioning of the wing backs and passes coming from the centre midfield.
- Good forwards moves.
- Japan plays often 1 vs 1 into the D.
- Good short play in front the D.
- Players using the deflections to the depth.
- Fast progressing with 2 – 3 players.
- Tonic players but not faster as you.

6. CONCLUSION

Every activity of the coach is supported by theoretical knowledge and the experience. The briefing “before the match” doesn’t escape from this rule. But we can only note the absence of spreading concerning this area. A team can be considered as an organised system, it is possible to model the playing animations. The playing model building will be a precious tool to give the understanding and the application of the playing instructions more efficient by the players.

It is evident that we need more investigations to make our models objective, reliable and valid. That’s why a next stage has to lead us to consult other expert coaches in order to know their methods and above to submerge them in the building of models.

From the models and their video illustrations built in the course of the competitions, we are able to elaborate a data bank of the playing models of the opponent teams. These data become a tool to help the team and the coach performance. If a generic classification of the playing styles can be realised, we are conscious that a finer analysis of the characteristics of each team makes them too particular and so it becomes impossible to classify them.

The study perspectives concerning the methods of the briefings presentation are rich. These meetings, either match preparation or debriefing can be differently approached according to the knowledge or the personality of the coach. However it seems necessary to have to formalize them. It’s one of the projects I had with some INSEP experts. This research or study will have to spread to “the time of the match”: preparation – management – debriefing of the match. We can call the coach activity during “the time of the match”: “coaching”.