CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The present day scenario of sports at national and international level is being characterized by professionalism leading to intense competition. The contributing force behind this is a sportsperson’s desire to excel in sport and thereby earning name, fame and wealth. Scientific investigation of the performance of sportspersons is playing a vital role in evaluating their success. Athletes are sweating hard to exhibit greater strength, endurance and proficiency in sports skills to establish supremacy over others. Almost everyday new records are being created by sportspersons; new techniques and strategies are being developed by the researchers and coaches to enable players to have upper hand against their opponents.

In the last few decades, sports have gained a place of prominence and are becoming tremendously popular at national & international level; the trend still continuous with a fast pace. Several new sports and games are being introduced and are becoming popular with the masses. Media is playing a vital role in making sports a world phenomenon. In sports like football, basketball, tennis, hockey, cricket, boxing etc., the appointment of doctors, physiotherapists, physical trainers & psychologists is a clear indication of the insatiate desire of every nation to establish its supremacy in this magical field. The attitude of athletes and their coaches is not much different from their respective sports
organizations. They are also working hard to get better results. Time taken by an athlete to complete a given course is lowering down; more distances are being gained in the field events. Lately computers have also started playing vital role in the diagnosis of challenging tasks in sports. The video recordings of almost every movement, made by the opponent’s team members on the play field, are being closely scrutinized by the coaches who are now well-equipped with ultra modern lap-tops and other computer aids.

Although psychological status of a sportsperson has also assumed importance with the passage of time in highly competitive sports situations, the role of measurement and evaluation in judging the capability of a sportsperson in certain sports skills (skill tests) is still a dominant factor in most of the advanced sports development systems. Mere physical fitness and a good psychological status are not enough for high level performance in sports especially in team games where a minor mistake of a member of the team may lead the team, on the whole, to a great loss. Numerous examples of a team losing an exciting and thrilling game due to lack of practice of basic skills of a given sport can be cited. The players having great combinations of basic skills are indeed have an upper edge upon their opponents those are fitter physically and psychologically.

In such an intense competitive environment no player or coach can sit idle without applying their mind on new innovations for their use. Researchers are now busier in discovering new trends and techniques for enhancing the level of performance of sportspersons. These magical developments have led physical educators to work on vast realms of experiments, experimentations
and discoveries to improve sports performances. High sports performance is not merely the product of physical, psychic and psychological prerequisites possessed by an individual sportsperson. High performances are attained after prolonged periods of practice for acquisition of basic sports skills. The studies of factors responsible for better performance of sportspersons of countries like USA, Russia, Germany, Korea, China in most of the sports conclude that these countries have specific physical education and sports programmes which facilitate their coaches and physical education teachers to select best individuals to a particular sport. Among these are the programmes of sports skill testing which are being run successfully at elementary school level by the physical education teachers and coaches.

The learning of desirable skills is the very foundation of physical education. It is through the development of skills and subsequent practice in them that physical educator realize their objectives. Accomplished performance in skills provides incentives for their continuance endeavor. The importance of identifying sportspersons at an early age period and to place them in the most appropriate game and sport is being recognized. History reveals that as man became more civilized, he also became more scientific, and as he became more scientific, he sought more exact ways to measure.

The history of sports skill testing can be traced back to the first decade of 20th century. Prior to 1924, certain fundamental skill test items were included as part of tests of general qualities of motor performance. But until this time, no attempt had been made to design a test battery to determine ability in particular game.
However, the first ever step in constructing sports skill test was taken by Brace in 1924 when he developed a battery of six achievement tests in basketball for elementary and secondary school levels. Additional pioneer work in the development of tests of sports skills was done by Beall in 1925 when he devised a test in tennis to measure selected qualities deemed essential for success in playing. During the decades of 1930s, and 1940s, tests were established for appropriate age and gender groups. Since these beginnings, sports skill testing has shown a steady growth. Sincere attempts have been made to develop skill tests in different sports. Sports skills test construction continues today because these early tests were designed to reflect rules and techniques of their day.

Although skill tests are more useful for evaluation of learning, they can also be used for placement of beginners as well as learned players, to assess the skill teaching methods, creating a selection criteria, making predictions, determining the achievement and progress made by pupils, evaluating training methods and for making comparative evaluation for motivation purposes and grading.

Having realized the significance of sports participation and sports competition many advance countries of the world are spending a huge amount of money to facilitate new training methods as well as techniques for competing with other countries. This keen struggle among the leading forces in sports field, to get the best possible performance out of their players and their teams, has led them to switch over to newest selection methods of players for a particular sport. The significance of the term “Catch them young” is being taken very seriously. Even the countries those are
at the lower pool of sports achievements are making relentless efforts to keep pace with better selection procedures and better training methods so that the talent could be placed in a specific sport for which he or she is the best possible stuff.

Education primarily through large muscular activity involves a number of refined skills, usually several skills are combined to permit the motor coordination necessary for individual and game situations. Skill tests when used to measure fundamental movements of walking, running, jumping, dodging, handling simple tools and using pieces of equipments, measure motor processes vital to life.

The measurement of sports skills has become an integral post of a well-conducted programme. Teachers and coaches are interested in determining the skill abilities of each student in order to place students into groups of like ability and thus facilitate teaching. They are also interested in discovering the improvement in their performance and the effectiveness of their instructional and coaching methods. In fact, the sports skill tests are really predictive measures, since they attempt to discriminate among levels of playing ability. The union Government of India as well as various State Governments are running many programmes to catch the term “catch them young” term in true sense so that skilled stuff of players could be identified at an early age.

Therefore, Proficiency in basic skills is the foremost and most important step in preparing and athlete or a team in best possible way. Players with better skills get due attention of the selectors during the selection procedures.
Today European, African and Some Asia Countries have achieved great heights in handball. For these countries handball is not just a game, but also an obsession. The heights these countries have achieved in handball is not an overnight affair but this is a result of their persistent efforts to upgrade sport by giving utmost attention to the technical and scientific development of the various aspects of the game of handball; A lot of research work being the heart of these efforts. But in India the game of handball was never given due attention. Not much effort was done to develop and establish norms for promising handball players since its inception.

1.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HANDBALL

The sport of handball as it is played today certainly has a chequered history. The very fact that man has always been more adept at using his hands than his feet lends credibility to the claim made by famous sports historians that he started playing handball much earlier than, say, football.

1.1.1 Ancient Forms of Handball

The games that were precursors of handball can only said to be distantly related to it in terms of their structure and rules of play. As per internet source, http://www.ihf.info/front_content, the games of "Urania" played by the Ancient Greeks (and described by Homer in the Odyssey) and "Harpaston" played by the Romans (and described by the Roman doctor Claudius Galenus in 130 to 200 A.D.) as well as in the "Fangballspiel" (or 'catch ball game') featured in the songs of the German lyrical poet Walther von der Vogelweide (1170-1230) all contained certain features that can be described as ancient forms of handball.
1.1.2 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF MODERN HANDBALL

The modern game of handball was first played towards the end of the 19th century in Denmark, Germany and Sweden. Recognition of field handball based on the games of “Raffball” (snatch ball) and “Königsbergerball” (Konrad Koch, 1846-1911) occurred at the turn of the century. Team handball started to catch on throughout Europe in 1912, when Carl Hirschmann, the honorary secretary of the International Football Association, encouraged players to pick up field handball to stay in shape during the off-season. (www.factbites.com)

The sport evolved and grew in popularity early in the 20th century. The first set of team handball rules was published on October 29, 1917 by Max Heiser, Karl Schelenz and Erich Konigh from Germany. After 1919 these rules were further improved by Karl Schelenz. The first international games were played under these rules, between Germany and Belgium for men in 1925 and Germany and Austria for women in 1930. Men’s field handball was played at the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin at the special request of Adolf Hitler. It was removed from the list of Olympic sports, to return as team handball in 1972 for the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. (www.encyclopedia.com)

The International Amateur Handball Federation (IAHF) was set up in 1928 on the occasion of the Olympic Games in Amsterdam. In 1938 the first Field Handball World Championship was played in Germany. The International Handball Federation (IHF) was formed in 1946 by the eight founding members of the International Amateur Handball Federation (IAHF). At that time
both the 11-a-side field handball played in Europe and a new 7-a-side indoor version preferred by the Scandinavians had equal popularity. Between 1938 and 1966 both forms of handball were played at separate World Championships.

The indoor version of handball was first present in the Munich 1972 Olympic Games. A competition involving 16 men’s teams was staged with Yugoslavia winning the first Olympic gold medal. Women’s team handball was added as an Olympic discipline in 1976, at the 1976 Summer Olympics. Handball has been played in the Asian Games since 1982 when it was introduced at the 9th Asian Games Delhi 1982, India. Currently, Handball Federation of India, All India Universities and School Games Federation of India run handball in India.

Changes are often necessary, and sometime, inevitable. This is also true for games and sports as of other things in life. For the past 35 years since its inception in Olympic Games as competitive sport, the game of handball has experienced phenomenal growth and popularity as is evident from it being played all over the world at school, college, inter-varsity, national and international levels in different age groups. For their guidance and to provide a yardstick to judge their playing ability in handball there is a great need of objective and scientific means.

Almost all the Olympic disciplines can boast of having skill tests, but the game of handball in its present form is devoid of tests of skills in handball. The researcher was of the firm belief that lack of scientific devices to assess the handball playing ability of potential handball players is one of the reasons of poor showing of our country at international level handball competitions. However, few handball tests do exist for judging the playing ability but are considered very old and do not match the latest game playing
situations. Therefore, the research scholar had made an effort to construct a skill test for objectively measuring handball playing ability based on latest techniques, fundamentals, strategies and requirements and rules of the game.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The researcher has undertaken the project entitled -

“Construction of handball skill test”

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the most fundamental skills and skill combinations for handball.

2. To construct a standardized battery of skill tests for handball on purely objective lines.

3. To prepare a standardized procedure for grading players according to norms/scores obtained.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS

1.4.1 Handball

In the present study, the word ‘handball’ refers to the game of handball, internationally known as ‘team handball’ and not to be misunderstood with ‘wall-handball’, a different game than the handball or team handball.

1.4.2 Team handball

Team handball, also known as field handball or Olympic handball, is a team sport where two teams of seven players each (six players and a goalkeeper) pass and bounce a ball trying to
throw it in the goal of the opposing team on a field forty meters long by twenty meters wide. (www.nationmaster.com)

Handball (or "team handball") is a fast-paced game involving two teams of seven players who pass, throw, catch and dribble a small ball with their hands while trying to score goals. The team with the most goals wins the game. A game consists of two 30-minute halves with a 10-minute half-time break.

1.4.3 Test

According to Phillip and Hornak (1979), "A test is a tool or instrument of measurement that is used to obtain data about a specific trait or characteristic of an individual or group."

Test refers to any specific instrument, procedure or technique used by a test administrator to elicit response from the test taker. (Barrow et. al. 1979).

For the purpose of this study 'test' would mean a 'specific sports skill test' in the form of an instrument (test item) to assess the specific sports skill ability of the participants.

1.4.4 Test Items

According to the International Handball Federation's official website http://www.ihf.info, "Test items refer to each individual evaluating instrument selected to assess one of the components of sports skill."

1.4.5 Skill

Skill is a learned trait based on the abilities that a person possesses. (Fleishman, 1964).
A skill may refer to an act in which the aim is the production of some pattern of movements which is considered to be technically sound. (Knapp, 1963).

1.4.6 Skill Test

Skill test is a measure of achievement in a particular sport activity. (Marrow, 1995)

1.4.7 Test Battery

Barrow and McGee (1979) defined test battery as a group of several tests standardized on the same populations so that results on the several tests are comparable; some time loosely applied to any group of tests administered together, even though not standardized on same subjects.

“The group of test items which are used to measure any type of fitness or ability is known as test battery.” (Kansal, 1996)

1.4.8 Factor

“Any trait or variable considered in an investigation; any trait or characteristic, common to one or several variables, which causes or accounts for the correlation among a set of variables.” (Barrow and Mac Gee, 1979)

1.4.9 Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical procedure that is used to produce a large number of variables called 'factors'. The object of factor analysis is to achieve parsimony and often to discover the essential variables that summarize the information in a large set of variables. (Jaeger, 1983)
As per Internet source www.wikipedia.org, “Factor analysis is a statistical data reduction technique used to explain variability among observed random variables in terms of unobserved random variables called factors.”

1.4.10 Validity

Validity is an estimate of the degree to which a test measures the factor or factors for which it was designed. (Basco and Gustafson, 1983)

1.4.11 Reliability

Reliability may be defined as the process of evaluating the degree of consistency with which a test or an instrument measures. (Kansal, 1996)

1.4.12 Test Reliability

Test reliability is a quantification of the consistency and inconsistency in examinee performance on a particular test. It is the extent or degree to which the set of test items consistently measure the same trait or skill. (www.uncg.edu.com)

1.4.13 Norms

According to Johnson and Nelson (1986) “Norms are values considered representative of specific population.”

A norm is a standard to which an obtained score may be compared. (Mathews, 1979)

1.5 LIMITATIONS

1. Variables like environment, diet and other natural factors were not controlled, which was the limitation of the study.
1.6 DELIMITATIONS

The study was delimited as follows:

1. The study was delimited to the university level handball players of selected universities taking part in North-East Zone and All India Inter-University Handball tournaments in session 2004-05 held at the sports ground of Panjab University, Chandigarh.

2. The study was delimited to only male handball players.

3. The study was delimited to the age group of 17-25 years.

4. The study was delimited to the development of team handball, and not the wall handball, skill tests.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The proficiency in basic skills of handball works as the basis in developing a normal athlete into a skilled handball player. No physical educator can think of placing an athlete in a specific game without judging his skill ability for the game. Likewise no coach can dare to select a novice handball player in his team if he lacks the basic skills of the given game. This study is significant because it developed certain tests to evaluate the various essential and basic skills of handball. The handball coaches, physical education teachers and future researchers will definitely become more equipped for identifying basic skills of handball in interested players, school, college and university students. The study will also be helpful to coaches and selectors of handball game in selecting players for different levels of competitions in an objective manner by using this test battery. By using these test items coaches may improve the performance of their teams by taking their tests during the preparatory camps and informing them of results. This way the
coach on one hand may judge a player's ability in different skills whereas on other hand the players may also work hard to improve his basics of the game, which do matter when the level of competition improves to higher stages. The study would also serve as the motivational force to the handball players to improve their specific handball skill ability.

The labour involved in the development of new batteries or tests become profitable in the sense that it results in improved coaching aids and as these in turn help to place physical education on a firmer scientific basis. The physical educators and handball coaches, by utilizing the results of the study, will further become well informed of the progress made by their trainees in learning the basics of handball. The most important contribution of this battery of handball skill tests is that it removes the handicap of the non-availability of a standardized handball skill test.