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### Mimi's blockade solved

BY KARIN M. ERDTMANN, 04.02.07, 19:51 H

Wingbeat and tonsil core: Why the head is so decisive for success on the field in handball.

Kürten / Cologne - It was after the semi-final in the Kölnarena. Germany had just made it into the final of the Handball World Cup in a dramatic match when youngster "Mimi" Kraus hugged a spectator in the press area and shouted, "He got rid of my block!" The enthusiasm was for Günter Klein, a 57-year-old family man from Kürten, lecturer at the Cologne Sports University, former national league coach and current instructor for the A licence. What until then only a few knew suddenly became public.

Shortly before the start of the World Cup, Klein says, the national coach Heiner Brand, who was plagued by a series of injuries, called him and asked for his support. The man from Kürten was supposed to work mentally with some of the players. A job he obviously carried out as discreetly as successfully. Hardly anyone had thought that the team would make it to the final.

Klein doesn't like to talk about all the people he coached. The body language of some of the handball players, however, spoke volumes. Chief defender and two-metre man Oliver Roggisch put a lot of pressure on the ribs at the exit of the hall, which almost took the breath away from Klein, who is still 1.82 metres tall. And the fact that goalkeeper legend Henning Fritz didn't want to let go of the Kürtener suggests that the star between the posts also owes part of his rediscovered top form to Klein's coaching.

Meanwhile, he is his usual modest self. Of course he came immediately when Brand called him. He was able to work with individual players on three days during the preparation. Asked in what capacity he was involved, Klein uses the term "head coach". He is a coach for the head who uses kinesiology and the "wingwave" method to try to reduce fears and release blockages. His clients are not only competitive athletes. Günter Klein also advises many students who suffer from exam nerves.

The wing flapping method has obviously also given the German national players wings - and with Klein in the stands for one or the other "Hormone boost in the brain". "My eyes get wet at the final whistle," he freely admits. In general, it was an unbelievable feeling to be among 19,000 frenetically cheering spectators in the hall. "They can transmit such energy, anything is possible.

But whether in competitive sport or in normal life, for Günter Klein the nltut to make mistakes is part of success. "Mistakes are developmental aids that help us move forward," he says. Klein, at any rate, is overjoyed that he was able to contribute "a small piece of the mosaic" to the handball players' success. "As a coach, I am a mountain guide who walks behind the group." And when the others are in the limelight, he is already quietly looking forward to new tasks. He will face them with his usual optimism: "As long as there are more solutions than problems, there will be no difficulties."

