

American football players in Finland: The cultural differences

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<p>The goal for this research was to discover and analyze the cultural differences between Finnish and American cultures, more specifically between Finnish and American athletes playing American football in Finland. This was done by interviewing American athletes who have played American football in Finland as professional import players. The interview the writer held was a qualitative open-ended question interview and was conducted to five American athletes who have played American football in Finland.</p> <p>The framework for this thesis is earlier cross-cultural research about Finland and United States. The writer uses the cultural dimension theories by cross-cultural researchers Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars to research about the ways in which the two research groups could be culturally different.</p> <p>Despite Finnish and American culture are perceived quite similar to each other in the theoretical framework of this thesis, this thesis did find out there is distinctive differences between Finnish and American culture according to the research interviews. The cultural differences are mostly in the cultural dimensions of power distance, individualism, masculinity, specificness and affectiveness of the researched Finnish and American cultures. This thesis explains what each of these cultural dimensions stand for, as well as explaining the theory of cultural dimensions in general.</p> <p>An important background difference between the two research groups is that the game of American football is played very differently in Finland and in United States. The writer demonstrates in the beginning of this thesis that in which ways is the game of American football different in Finland and in United States.</p> <p>This thesis was conducted between October 2018 and April 2019. The writer is a Bachelor's of Business Administrations student, specializing in International Business. The writer has over eight years of experience in American football, five of these years playing in a multi-cultural American football team including Finnish and American players. With this thesis, the writer wants to give his contribution to the field of cross-cultural management and cross-cultural understanding by researching about the cultural differences of Finnish and American culture by doing the research to a field he's familiar with.</p>	
Key words cross-cultural management, cultural dimensions, international business, sports management, American football	

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1 Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis, the research topic will be introduced and explained. The research problem and its sub-problems will be introduced as well as the general framework that will be used throughout this thesis.

1.1 Research problem, research sub-problems and framework

The main research problem of this thesis is following: “*How are Finnish American football teams and players culturally different to American teams and players*”? This question will be answered by interviewing athletes that have played American football both in Finland and in United States and by comparing the data to how Finnish and American culture are perceived in the theoretical framework.

The framework for the cultural aspects in this thesis will be the cultural dimensions theory by the experts of cross-cultural management: Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars. Both of their cultural dimensions theories will be used to create a base on how Finnish and American players are expected to think and behave, according to the previous cross-cultural research. The results of the interviews in this thesis will be compared to how Trompenaars’ and Hofstede’s theory perceives Finnish and American culture.

It is significant to note, that the game of American football is played differently in both countries. While in United States the game of American football is a huge phenomenon and the competition is huge, in Finland the game of American football is played mostly by amateurs in all levels. This is a major background difference that will have to be taken into consideration throughout the research and when comparing the answers from the interviewees.

Because cultural differences are very multi-dimensional, it is important to split these research problems into multiple sub-problems. The framework used to create these sub-problems are from the cultural dimension theories by Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars. Their created theory about cultural dimensions between countries will be used to research about things in which way Finnish and American players and teams *could* be different.

The writer established nine different research sub-problems to research about the cultural differences of both cultures. The research sub-problems are following:

- How do Finnish teams and players set goals different to American teams and players?
- How do Finnish teams and players treat the failure to reach their goals different to American teams and players?
- How willing are Finnish teams to try out new concepts and ideas compared to American teams?
- How do Finnish teams treat competition different to American teams?
- How do Finnish players treat leadership positions in the team different to American players?
- How do Finnish players communicate with their teammates different to American players?
- How individualistic are Finnish players compared to American players?
- What is the relationship between teammates in Finnish and American culture on and off the field?
- In which ways is the game of American football played differently in Finland and United States?

1.2 Writer's background

The writer specialized in International Business in his Bachelor's of Business Administration degree. The writer also has played over 8 years of American football, 5 of those years he played in a semi-professional men's team – and those teams have contained both Finnish and American players. Therefore the writer wanted to conduct the research to a field and organization he has most knowledge of. The writer considers that his broad knowledge of the game of American football and its culture makes him an appropriate person to conduct such a research.

The writer considers cross-cultural management a very important and overlooked field of study. Influenced by the work of likes of Hofstede and Trompenaars, the writer wants to

give his own contribution to the field of cross-cultural management and cultural understanding by conducting his research to an area he's familiar with.

1.3 The contents of this thesis and key terms

This thesis is constructed first to introduce the case subject of American football in the way that a person who is not familiar with the sport could get a basic understanding of the nature of the sport both in Finland and in United States, and this will be covered in Chapter 2. In chapter 3, the concept of cross-cultural management and cultural dimensions theories will be introduced to the reader. In chapter 4, the writer explains his field research he conducted to this thesis: the methodology, the practices and why these were chosen for this research. In chapter 5, the results of the interviews will be demonstrated. In chapter 6, the results in this thesis will be concluded and reflected to the theoretical framework. At the end of the thesis, the sources used as well as the research interviews the writer held are as transcripts in Appendix 1.

Some key terms related to this thesis are explained and defined below:

Cross-cultural management = concept in business management studies where the cultural background of each group and individual is taken into consideration, so that they can be treated appropriately

Cultural dimensions = aspects in which cultures have been researched to be different, used in the work of Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars

American football = a game originated from association football (soccer) and rugby, which then evolved into a different game which is particularly popular in United States. By Americans, referred as "football".

NFL = National Football League, the main professional American football league in United States

Maple League (Fin. Vaahteraliiga) = the highest American football league in Finland

2 Analysis of the case subject – American football

In this chapter the writer introduces the game of American football. The nature of the sport will be explained as well as it will be explained how the game is played differently in Finland and in United States.

2.1 American football as a sport

American football evolved from two particular sports that were popular in other parts of the world: soccer and rugby. Soccer and rugby came to North America already in 19th century and according to historians the first form of American football emerged November 6th, 1869 when two New Jersey universities competed in a game which resembled more rugby than modern day American football. Around 1876 Walter Camp, a sensational player at Yale University in United States started to distinct American football from to its more now commonly known form and Camp can be considered as one of the main founding fathers of American football. (Long & Czarnecki 2015, 10-11)

Especially in its earliest form, the game of American football was very violent. The game of American football was almost banned in 1906, but the United States' President Theodore Roosevelt convinced the college representatives to initiate stricter rules to make the game less violent and dangerous, which saved the game of American football at its time. Football has been cleaned up a lot since the beginning of the game. But the fact still remains American football as a game is very dangerous, high-impact sport and the players are in a significant risk of injury whenever playing the game of American football. (Long & Czarnecki 2015, 11).

The objective of the game of American football is to score more points than the opposing team. Points can be scored by either taking the ball to opponent's end zone, kicking the ball through opposing team's uprights or tackling an opposing ball carrier in their own end zone. Teams will take turn moving the ball towards the opponent's end zone and the team in control of the ball in the beginning of each "down" (offensive attempt) is considered the offensive team and the team without the ball as the defensive team. The offensive team must proceed at least 10 yards on the field within 4 downs in order to remain as the offensive team. The offensive team may move the ball with either "running plays", by simply carrying the ball towards opposing end zone, or "passing plays", which means throwing

the ball to a teammate who proceeds to move towards opponent's end zone. The defensive team tries to prevent the offensive team from approaching towards their endzone by either tackling the offensive ball carrier to the ground or preventing offensive player from catching a forward pass. After each touchdown or field goal, the football will be kicked to the other team in a "kick off", which then starts the series of offensive attempts for the other team. (Long & Czarnecki 2015, 34-38, 77-80, 90-93)

2.2 American football in United States

American football is amongst the biggest sports in United States. Over 1 million high school students played American football in their school's team in United States in the 2012-2013 school year, which is more than in any other sport in the country (CNS 2014). Only about 70 thousand from these continue playing American football in the college level and only a bit more than a percentage of the college players continues to play in a professional level (NCAA 2018a). The highest professional league for American football in United States, the National Football League, is amongst the biggest and most valuable sport leagues in the world. In the 2013 season NFL made over 6 billion USD dollars in revenue (ESPN 2014). It is evident that the competition in American football is enormous in the United States, and the reward in the professional level for the best players is often multi-million-dollar contracts for a single season. The highest salaries for American football players go as high as over 30 million USD for a season (Spotrac 2018). Pro football has been ranked the most popular sport in the United States in 30 straight polls and 35% of the Americans chose pro football as their favorite sport (Long & Czarnecki 2015, 9).

2.3 American football in Finland

Compared to United States, American football is very marginal sport in Finland and it is played by amateurs, or at best by semi-professionals. In the year 2015, the number of registered American football players in Finland was 2853 (SAJL 2015). Playing American football is mostly concentrated on registered sports clubs, although in the year 2010 a college series was started for American football in Finland. The number of teams in the college series is around 10 yearly, while the number of registered American football sports clubs in Finland is usually around 30 (SAJL 2018a).

The highest leagues in Finland are the “Maple League” (officially “Vaahteraliiga” in Finnish) and the First Division (SAJL 2018b). These are the only leagues where it is allowed to bring players from outside of the European Union to strengthen your team (SAJL 2019). However, teams in the Maple League are allowed to have only three players outside of European Union, while only two of them can be on the field at once (SAJL 2019). In First Division, you’re only allowed to have two players and they cannot be on the field at once (SAJL 2019). Because of the popularity of American football in United States, the players Finnish teams get outside of the European Union are often American. These imported American players will generally receive their housing and other living arranged to them by the Finnish team, and they will generally earn financial reward, so they can be considered professionals in Finnish environment. The players coming to Finnish team from United States are players who have generally played American football in college level but have graduated, and have no interest returning to play college football. This is because it is against the NCAA rules to have professional players in any school’s team (NCAA 2018b).

3 Cultural analysis

In the Cultural analysis chapter, the writer introduces the concept and importance of cross-cultural management. The cultural dimensions theories from Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars will be introduced, which is what the field research used strongly as its framework. Afterwards, some practical business behavior in both Finnish and American culture are demonstrated.

3.1 Significance of cross-cultural management

In order to get the most out of your human resources in a multi-cultural environment, managing the different cultures properly is the key. Although it is individuals who ultimately form the culture of a specific organization, the values of each individual are formed through the family, social and national environment (Browaeys & Price 2008, 15-17). Each national culture has a different value system and they will result in different behavior for that society. The value systems typically come from the circumstances as well as the history of the specific area (Harris et al. 2004, 6-7). Culture significantly matters when managing people from different national cultures: misunderstandings in cross-cultural interaction can easily cause broken business relationships, resources and time gets wasted and employees and managers may get offended or ashamed (Branine 2011, 24).

3.2 Defining “culture” in the context of this thesis

“We are group animals. We use language and empathy, and practice collaboration and inter-group competition. The unwritten rules of how we do these things differ from one human group to another. ‘Culture’ is how we call these unwritten rules about how to be a good member of the group.”
– (Geert Hofstede 2018)

“Culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas” (F. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 6)

Because the framework for the cultural research in the field research in this thesis is largely from the cultural dimensions theory by Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars, it is important to use their definition of what culture is. Although explained quite differently, both cross-cultural management experts consider culture to be something that people within a country considers to be the right way to act. Hofstede calls these “unwritten rules” and Trompenaars considers them dilemmas. Dilemmas are questions you can answer in two different ways and answers to the questions tell what each culture considers valuable.

It is important to understand there are cultures within each community. However, the reason why the cross-cultural analysis is done country based is that nations are the most distinctive groups we have grouped people for the last three centuries (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010, 24).

3.3 Cultural dimensions

This thesis uses the cultural dimensions theory from two experts of cross-cultural management: Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars. Both of the cross-cultural experts have conducted research with their cultural dimensions and proven that there are clear and significant differences in their dimensions between different cultures. This thesis is limited to these cultural dimensions theories for their proven significant differences, although there can be lots of cultural dimensions we aren't yet vary of. Both Hofstede and Trompenaars have provided numbers in where Finnish and American culture place in their cultural dimension. Whenever there is data about the score of Finnish and American culture placing in the cultural dimension, it will be written in the end of each sub-section.

3.4 Cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede

Geert Hofstede (PhD) is a Dutch social psychologist, who is most known for his comprehensive research about cultural differences. His most significant research he had done was a research on a multi-national tech company IBM. From the results of this research he created index numbers for each country about their placing in his 6 created cultural dimensions: Power distance, individualism, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and indulgence.

In this chapter Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be explained, and the index scores for Finnish and United States cultures will be given to demonstrate the cultural differences between Finnish and American culture.

3.4.1 Power distance

Hofstede's "power distance" cultural dimension describes about social hierarchies within a culture. The larger the power distance is in the culture, the more accepted it is that power is distributed unequally. In a high power distance culture the positions of power are more respected and less questioned. In a lower power distance culture, there always have to be a justification for someone being in a position of power. In a high power distance culture power is very centralized, whereas in low power distance cultures power is decentralized. In lower power distance culture the power may shift rapidly even within a certain community, whereas in high power distance culture this is very rare. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 60-76)

Finland and United States are both fairly low in power distance index. In Hofstede's research, he scores Finland to have a Power Distance index of 33, whereas United States has power distance of 40. This means below average power distance. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 57-59).

3.4.2 Individualism (by Geert Hofstede)

Individualism describes how dependent an individual is of a group when conducting their place in a society. In an individualistic culture it is expected and accepted that a person primarily takes into consideration only their own needs. In individualistic culture social circles are smaller, and usually limited to their nuclear family. People tend to choose who they are willing to associate with. On the contrary, collectivistic cultures put lots of significance on acting for the best interest of your group. Going against your group could be considered one of the worst things an individual can do. In a collectivistic society the social circles are usually significantly larger and often extend beyond just one's own nuclear family. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 93-117).

Finland is considered fairly individualistic country, scoring an index score of 63 in Hofstede's dimensions. However, United States scores 91 on Hofstede's individualism cultural dimension making it the most individualistic country in the world in Hofstede's theory.

Therefore both cultures are individualistic, but American culture is significantly more. (Hofstede et al 2010, 95-97).

3.4.3 Long-term orientation

Hofstede's "long-term orientation" dimension is very broad and expands to lots of aspects in life, but the basic description of it regards to the time frame which the culture deems important. In short-term orientation cultures, freedom, achievement and thinking for oneself is deemed important. Leisure time is given significance. In terms of business sense, focus is often mainly on this year's profits. Meanwhile long-term orientation cultures focus on constant learning, honesty, adaptiveness, accountability and self-discipline. In the business context, the profits ten years from now are given the focus. Leisure time is also given less significance. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 251-267).

Finland and United States are considered short-term oriented cultures, although United States notably more. Finland's index number is 38 and United States' 25 in this cultural dimension. This means that according to Hofstede's theory, Finnish culture is a bit more inclined to focus on things more in long-term. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 255-257).

3.4.4 Uncertainty avoidance

Hofstede's "uncertainty avoidance" describes how inclined is a culture to avoid anything that they're not familiar with. High uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to avoid anything that they're not comfortable with. For example, this means the cultures only follow their old procedures that have been proven to work. In low uncertainty avoidance cultures people always try new ways of doing and seeing things and new ideas can often even draw curiosity. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 190-212).

Finnish and American cultures are both quite in the middle in this aspect, scoring 59 for Finland and 46 for United States. This means Finnish culture is slightly more inclined to go with what has proven to work and American culture is a little bit more open to new ideas and concepts. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 192-194).

3.4.5 Masculinity

Masculinity describes about culture's competitive spirit, which is considered a "masculine" trait. In feminine cultures, it is considered that everyone should be taken care of – even if they are behind in the competition. Masculine cultures are notably more aggressive in one's pursuits towards their goals compared to feminine cultures. Feminine cultures accept failure more than masculine cultures. Masculinity also refers to the significance of gender specific roles in the culture, although this aspect is not so much focused on this thesis. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 160-170).

Masculinity is where Finnish and American culture has the biggest gap, according to Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions. United States has an index score of 62 for masculinity, while Finland has a score of 26. This argues that American culture is far more competitive and aggressive masculine culture, whereas Finnish culture is far more feminine. This means Finnish culture considers helping the ones in the bottom more important and doesn't consider aggressive competition and constant hunt for success as important. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 141-143).

3.4.6 Indulgence

Indulgence refers to freedom that the members of a culture do things just because they want to do them. Indulgent cultures are less disciplined, there's a high importance for doing things that just make you feel good. There's a high importance for leisure, having friends and the moral discipline is lower. In restraint cultures, people are more restrained in their behavior. Doing things just for personal happiness isn't considered virtuous. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 290-298).

Finnish and American cultures are fairly indulgent. Finland scores 57 for Indulgence and United States 68. This means that both societies consider personal freedom and their pursuit for happiness an acceptable and a virtuous thing for individual to seek for. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 282-285).

3.5 Cultural dimensions by Fons Trompenaars

Fons Trompenaars (PhD) is a world-wide known consultant, who has worked for numerous multinational corporations all over the world. He has over 25 years of experience helping Fortune 500 leaders and professionals to manage cross-cultural business dilemmas (THTconsulting, 2019). Trompenaars researches cultural dimensions by creating a dilemma, a question where you need to choose between two alternatives to demonstrate the nature of the cultural dimension. The way each group answers to that question therefore defines the culture in that regard.

3.5.1 Universalistic and particularistic cultures

Trompenaars' universalistic cultures are considered ones that consider that "What is good and what is right can always be defined and always applies". In particularistic cultures the attention is given to relationships and particular circumstances. Trompenaars' example of this is a dilemma, whether the person in each nation would write a false review in order to help their friend's business. According to Trompenaars' research, both Finland and United States are in his cultural dimension very universalistic countries because 66% of the Americans and 75% of Finnish people said that they would not write a false review to help their friend. From the people answering to this dilemma, Finnish culture is the most universalistic culture in the world. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 39-49)

3.5.2 Individualistic and communitarianistic cultures (by Trompenaars)

Individualistic compared to communitarianistic cultures are about how dependent is a person of their group, when conducting their place in their culture. Individualistic cultures are for individual freedom but also individual responsibility, whereas communitarianistic cultures are about shared responsibility but also requires an individual to take their group into consideration at all times.

Trompenaars' researched about individualism of a culture by following two questions: "If a defect is discovered in an installation, is the person making the mistake taking responsibil-

ity of the mistake or is the responsibility taken by the entire group the person was in? (*Paraphrased*)” From the Finnish people who answered this question, 38% of the Finnish people expect the responsibility being on the individual who made the mistake but from the Americans 54% expect the responsibility being on the individual making the mistake. The second question from Trompenaars about this cultural dimension is about whether people have to work together in a job and whether individual credit can be taken in one’s job. 72% of the Americans believe that jobs where people can work alone and take individual credit are more common, while 76% of Finnish people believes this from their culture. Therefore both are considered highly individualistic cultures by Trompenaars’ research, however a difference between Finnish and Americans is that Finnish believe a little bit more for shared responsibility. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 65-78)

3.5.3 Affective and neutral cultures

Whether a culture is affective or neutral depends on how likely are people to show emotions openly in their culture. In a neutral culture it is considered appropriate to not show your emotions, especially on a professional context. Meanwhile in affective cultures showing emotions is considered perfectly normal and accepted, and rather even expected. Aside from openly expressing one’s emotions, whether a culture is neutral or affective can be seen in the words where one expresses their opinion. In a neutral culture, it is expected to argue “from reason”, while in an affective culture it is typical to demonstrate how one is feeling. Trompenaars’ researched this cultural dimension by asking whether a person would not show their emotions openly at work. From the Finnish people who answered this question 41% answered they would not show openly emotions, while 43% of the Americans answered they would not openly show their emotions. Both Finnish and American culture seem to be quite neutral in this regard. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 87-90)

3.5.4 Specific and diffuse cultures

Whether a culture is specific or diffuse culture regards to how far do the relationships between people extend to. For example, in a specific culture a boss is one’s boss only when being at work but outside of the work environment the boss will no longer be referred or treated as their boss. In a diffuse culture the person remains one’s boss at all times.

Trompenaars' researched about this cultural dimension by asking how likely is a subordinate to help their boss to paint the boss' house. 89% of the Finnish people and 82% of the American people would not help to paint their boss' house, making Finnish and American cultures very specific cultures in this regard. Specific and diffuse also relates to how far does a specific organization, like one's company they're working for extend to in one's life. In Trompenaars' question "Does a company have to be responsible for the housing of their employees?" 70% of the Finnish believe this not being the case, while 85% of the Americans believe a company should not be responsible of this. This further signifies how both Finnish and American culture are considered quite specific. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 101-124)

3.5.5 Achievement and ascription cultures

Whether a culture is an achievement oriented or ascription oriented culture is about how status is perceived on a person. On an achievement based culture, the status is obtained by *doing* and in an ascription based culture the status is obtained by *being*. In an achievement-based culture one's own personal achievements are considered to be the important factor, while in ascription-based culture one's group largely defines the status of that person. Trompenaars researched about this aspect by asking from people whether they believe one's respect towards them depends on their family background. 87% of the Americans and 89% of the Finnish people believe that this is not the case, which makes both cultures very achievement based cultures. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 125-132)

3.5.6 Sequential and synchronic cultures

Sequential and synchronic refers to how a culture sees and uses time. If time is considered sequential, it is a series of linear passing events. If time is considered synchronic, it is considered that tasks can be worked on in parallel. In sequential cultures things will always be organized and done in a specific, pre-determined order. In synchronic cultures, lots of different goals can be tried to be reached at the same time. An example of this is how a culture serves customers in a business: In very sequential cultures the first one will be always served first, no matter of the length of the case. In synchronic cultures, people can be helped or served in more of an unspecific order. For example, in a synchronic culture it is acceptable to help multiple customers at once or even help the one with the most

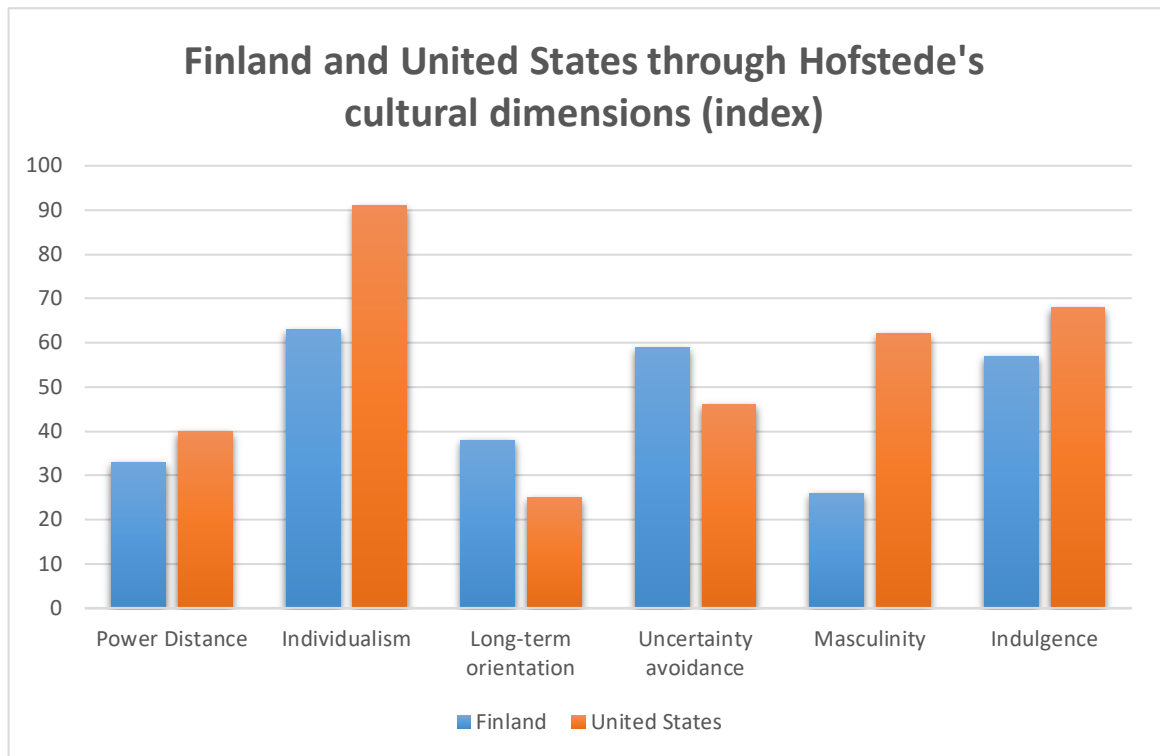
urgent or the most easily fixed problem. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012. 147-152)

3.5.7 Inner and outer direction

Whether a culture is inner or outer directed is about whether people consider they are “captains of their own fate”, meaning that how largely one considers to being able to affect their own life. On a societal level this can be seen how the culture treats nature: Is nature, such as the weather something that people should try to control or is whether something people just have to live with the best they can? Inner-directed try to take the most control over everything they can while outer-directed try to adapt along with the natural state of things. 32% of the Finnish and also 32% of the Americans believe people should try to seek to control the nature. However, 82% of the Americans believe that what happens to them is because of their own doing, while 67% of the Finnish people believe that way. This means American culture is a bit more inner-directed than Finnish culture, believing that one is in control in their own fate. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, 173-180)

3.6 The overview of Finnish and American culture through cultural dimensions

Through Hofstede’s 6-D model, Finnish culture can be characterized as low power distance, moderately high individualism, moderately short-term oriented, quite uncertainty avoidant, feminine and moderately indulgent country. Meanwhile American culture can be characterized as fairly low in power distance, very high in individualism, short-term oriented, average in uncertainty avoidance, fairly masculine, and indulgent country. Biggest differences between Finland and United States are in individualism and masculinity, according to Hofstede’s 6-D model. (Hofstede et al, 2010)



(Adapted from Hofstede et al. 2010)

Trompenaars does not have definitive index numbers, only percentages of people answering in a certain way in each nation, so only way to simply compare is to give a descriptive word in how big of a percentage in each nation interviewees answered to Trompenaars' dilemma in a certain way compared to other countries.

Through Trompenaars' dilemmas, Finnish culture can be described as a very universalistic, quite individualistic, slightly more neutral than affective, highly specific, achievement based and inner directed culture. Meanwhile American culture can be described as quite universalistic, highly individualistic, slightly more neutral than affective, highly specific, achievement based and inner directed culture. These descriptions were done by the writer by comparing the scores of Finnish and American cultures to other countries from Trompenaars' tables. In general, Finnish and American cultures are very close to each other in these Trompenaars' cultural dimensions. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012.)

Trompenaars' dimension	Finland	United States
Universalism or Particularism	Very universalistic	Quite universalistic
Individualism or Communitarianism	Quite individualistic	Highly individualistic
Affective or Neutral	Slightly on neutral side	Slightly on neutral side
Specific or Diffuse	Highly specific	Highly specific
Achievement or Ascription	Achievement	Achievement
Inner or Outer direction	Inner directed	Inner directed

(Adapted from Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012, descriptive words used by the writer by comparing the scores to other countries)

To conclude, Finnish and American culture are very close to each other according to the cultural dimensions theories from both Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars, despite countries being located in completely different continents. This means that for the most part, Finnish people wouldn't be expected to experience too big of cultural shocks when being in an American community or Americans wouldn't be expected to experience too big of culture shock being in a Finnish community.

3.7 Business practicalities in both cultures

To conclude this chapter, some practical examples of common Finnish and American business behavior will be presented to give concrete examples in the way both Finnish and American cultures are expected to behave in business environment.

3.7.1 Business practicalities in Finland

In the sense of doing business with a Finnish person, Finnish people are described as quite reserved, although may get less reserved when you get to know them. Punctuality is considered important for social encounters. Finnish people avoid showing emotions in public, which is to not be confused for lack of actual excitement or enthusiasm. Finnish are considered very soft-spoken when communicating and also consider interrupting a person as a rude act. Finnish people like to discuss about things realistically and do not appreciate hype or exaggerated claims, such as to make a point. Decision making for

Finnish is a methodical, deliberate process and Finnish people usually like to take their time before reaching their decision. (Gesteland 1999, 244-247)

3.7.2 Business practicalities in United States

In the sense of doing business with Americans, they prefer to be very efficient. They prefer to be very deal-focused, small talk and preliminaries are often considered as a waste of time. Americans are very used to doing business with strangers and often resort to build a relationship and trust as the deal is moving on. Time is a very valuable and even a tangible asset, which can be saved or lost. This is also why Americans are among the fastest decision makers in the world. Americans are very punctual when doing business, in regards of time. Keeping someone waiting is intolerably rude. American way of doing business is considered quite informal, or at least they want to get to the informality as soon as possible. Informality is also considered as a way to show friendliness and warmth. Americans are quite extroverted compared to Northern Europeans, such as Finns but aren't as extroverted as Latin Americans, for example. Americans also like to be realistic when communicating, and say things exactly how they see it. (Gesteland 1999, 272-276)

4 The field research

The writer conducted a qualitative research interview as a method to get information to answer his research problems. In this chapter, the method of research will be explained why it was chosen and it will be reflected to the theoretical framework of how a research of this type should be properly conducted. The interview questions will be presented and explained that why they were chosen and in which ways do the questions answer to the research questions. This chapter will be concluded by explaining the implementation of the interview research.

4.1 The method of the research

When conducting a research, it is important to choose the most suitable method to answer your research problem. Social science research is most commonly divided to qualitative research and quantitative research (Matthews & Ross 2010, 141). Quantitative methods gather and work with data that can be counted and coded. They're also structured by the researcher in a way that the researcher decides both the questions and the type of answers that can be given (Matthews & Ross 2010, 147). Quantitative research consists of surveys and questionnaires which ask the same questions from large amount of people (Matthews & Ross 2010, 147). Qualitative methods gather and work with data that is constructed by the research participant in their own way and it can be interpreted and structured by the researcher as part of the analytical process (Matthews & Ross 2010, 147-148). Qualitative research methodology can be characterized as unstructured or semi-structured compared to quantitative research methodology and qualitative research methodology allow research participants to talk about the topics in their own way (Matthews & Ross 2010, 147-148).

Other characteristics to qualitative research methodology is that it answers to research problems with "How?" rather than "How many" (Silverman 2010, 118). Qualitative research is conducted when the questions are open-ended (Silverman 2010, 190). Qualitative research is also good way to get a particular group to describe things from "their point of view" (Silverman 2010, 191).

Qualitative interview studies are usually conducted with quite small numbers. The patterns of questioning are often rather informal, where the aim is to let the interviewee set the pace. The interviewer will usually have a prepared set of questions but these are only used as a guide. Departures from the guidelines of the questions are not seen as a problem and are often encouraged. (Silverman 2010, 194-197)

When doing the interview research it is important to record and transcript the interview properly. The actual conducted questions and answers should be in detail in the way they were made in the interview, because even seemingly small details may lead the interviewee in a particular direction. (Silverman 2010, 199-200, 240)

The writer chose the interview to be done in a qualitative method for multiple reasons. The biggest reason was in terms of implementation and the smaller sample size. However, there were other reasons why the writer considered qualitative research the best for this thesis. One significant reason was that the writer considered all of his interviewees to be very knowledgeable in this topic and didn't want to limit their answers, which would be a problem when gathering quantitative data. Also because cultural dimensions in writer's opinion are quite abstract concepts, the writer wanted to get more insight in the way that the interviewee considers the cultural difference exists, if it exists. For example, the writer wanted to know whether interviewees feel that the cultural differences exist due to ethnical differences or due to circumstantial differences.

The writer acknowledges that some quantitative methods have been used for similar cultural analysis, like the theory of Fons Trompenaars which are researched through how big percentage would answer in a certain way from a specific culture. The sample sizes of Trompenaars' research however are much larger and therefor can have significance in terms of quantitative research, which is what is not possible in this research which is conducted to only five people.

4.2 The interview questions

The writer conducted a questionnaire format for his interview that consisted of a preliminary interview question to get the interviewee's background in American football and then proceeded to ask his ten questions he intended to get answers from the interviewees to answer his research problems. The writer started by asking each interviewee their experience in football, both in Finland and in United States. The interviewer wanted to get the

background of each interviewee to understand how experienced the players are both in Finland and in United States. This preliminary question was somewhat misunderstood, as some of the interviewees started to explain their experiences already in a great detail. Although the writer thought with the first interviewees that he's already getting a bit side-tracked, he let the interviewees to proceed without pausing them, as this is acceptable in qualitative interview research. The writer was able to take answers to lots of questions even in the preliminary part of the interview. After interviewing about players' background, the writer then proceeded to his actual ten intended interview questions. These ten questions were made with a purpose to get an answer to the research sub-problems the writer had made for his thesis, but also were made with a purpose to reflect to the theoretical framework the writer had been using. All of these questions were open-ended questions so that the interviewees would be the most elaborative as possible. In addition, the writer wanted to know why the interviewees considered a specific cultural difference to exist and this would not be possible with a question that only required the interviewee answer with a simple yes or no.

The first interview question

After the preliminary question, the first question to the interviewees was: *"How do Finnish people treat leadership positions like coach, team captain or team manager different to American players?"* This interview question was made to answer to the research sub-problem about the cultural differences in treating leadership positions. The framework for this question is from Geert Hofstede's "Power distance" cultural dimension, and the answers from the interviewees will be compared to how Geert Hofstede has scored Finland and United States in this aspect. In a high power distance culture coaches and team captains would be treated with a lot of respect, whereas low power distance cultures they would be seen more equal to every other player in the team.

The second interview question

The second question of this interview was: *"How do Finnish teams treat practices differently to American teams? For example, is the focus in practices more about constant competition against each other or more about personal skills improvement?"* This question

wanted to research about the competitiveness aspect of both Finnish and American cultures and relates to Hofstede's "Masculinity" cultural dimension, which states that the more competitive the more masculine a culture is. This was one of the only questions the writer considered it is required to direct the interviewees a little bit by giving a distinction between "competing" and "improving skills" because otherwise the interviewees most likely do not know what the interviewer would mean by "competition".

The third interview question

The third question in the interview was: *"In which ways is it different how Finnish and American teams set goals for their team, both in short-term and long-term?"* This was first of two questions where the writer wanted to see how the Finnish and American cultures set goals in their culture. The writer wanted to put a distinction to "short-term goals" and "long-term goals" to reflect the answers to this question to Hofstede's "Long-term orientation" cultural dimension, to see how long-term orientated both team cultures are.

The fourth interview question

The fourth question of the interview was similar to the third question but now asking in an individual level how athletes set goals to themselves individually, rather than how teams set goals. The interviewee thought of combining these questions three and four into one question but for the sake of making it easier to answer, the interviewee separated these two questions. As the previous interview question, this was meant to research about long-term and short-term orientation of athletes but rather in an individual level.

The fifth interview question

The fifth interview question was *"In which ways does the interviewee think Finnish and American teams and players treat failure to reach their goals differently?"* This question was made to research about the "masculinity" cultural dimension by Geert Hofstede within Finnish and American football team. Masculine cultures are considered highly competitive

and failure to reach a set goal would be presumably met with bigger disappointment in a masculine culture.

The sixth interview question

The sixth interview question was a follow up to the fifth one but researched about different aspect. The fifth interview question was *“How much do you think Finnish and American team culture consider success and failure to be ‘because of their own doing’ and how much is it considered to be ‘outside of their control?’”* This question was made to research about Trompenaars’ “Inner or outer-direction” cultural dimension. Inner-directed cultures consider to be largely in control of their own fate and this question very directly attacks that question in both Finnish and American culture in American football teams. The interviewees did not answer to this question in the way the writer intended it, and quite rather got more answers to some other cultural dimensions than the one the writer was looking for. Therefore the writer left the cultural dimension of the inner and outer direction out of the analytical part.

The seventh interview question

The seventh interview question was *“In which ways do you feel Finnish players communicate differently with their teammates, compared to American players?”* The writer wanted to get information about Trompenaars’ “affective or neutral” cultural dimension with this question. The word “communication” was interpreted in multiple ways but the writer tried to get the interviewees also answer in the way that relates whether the communication by Finnish and American culture is affective or neutral.

The eight interview question

The eight interview question was *“Is either Finnish or American team culture more inclined to try out new ideas and concepts, and if so in which ways?”* The interviewer wanted to research about both cultures’ “uncertainty avoidance” cultural dimension. In this context,

teams that follow old ways would be considered highly uncertainty avoidant while cultures willing to try out new things would be considered less uncertainty avoidant.

The ninth interview question

The ninth interview question was *“Are teammates closer in Finnish or American sports team when being outside of the football field?”* This research question was to find out if Finnish and American team cultures were what Trompenaars would call “specific” or “diffuse”, meaning that how far the relationships of people will extend to in a culture. In specific cultures the relationships of teammates would not extend outside of the sport’s team where as in diffuse cultures teammates would be close no matter of the context.

The tenth interview question

The tenth interview question was *“Do you feel that Finnish or American team culture put more significance on group activities?”* This was a follow up question to 9th question to discover how specific or diffuse Finnish and American culture are. If the cultures were diffuse, it would be expected that the team would want to meet outside of the American football context, whereas in specific cultures the teammates would expect to meet each other only in American football related events.

4.3 The implementation of research and analysis of the results

The writer held all the interviews by contacting each interviewee through Facebook messenger, whether they wish to take part in the interview of this thesis. The writer knew all the interviewees from before, either he had played with them or in a local rival team. The process of each interview was very similar. The writer and the interviewee arrived in the agreed location and held the interview in a sufficiently quiet room, so that the communication would be the clearest as possible. The writer recorded each interview with his phone and made a written transcription of each interview afterwards. All transcripts can be found in the Appendix 1 of this thesis.

The held interviews, their location and their time:

Interview of Jabari Harris: Contacted through Facebook messenger in the 23rd November 2018, interview held the 23rd November 2018, in Espoo.

Interview of Eric Irvin: Contacted through Facebook messenger in the 23rd November, interview held the 26th of November 2018, in Helsinki.

Interview of Stephen Stokes: Contacted through Facebook messenger in the 8th of January 2019, interview held the 9th of January 2019, in Helsinki.

Interview of Vincent Pervis: Contacted through Facebook messenger in the 15th of January 2019, interview held in the 23th of January 2019, in Helsinki.

Interview of Robert Johnson: Contacted through Facebook messenger in the 8th of January 2019, interview held in the 30th of January 2019, in Helsinki.

After the interviews the writer began to make a transcript of the interviews in a written version and then analyze the data. The transcripts can be found in Appendix 1 of this thesis. Working with qualitative data is about interpreting and getting understanding of the words, stories, accounts and explanations of the respondents in the research (Matthews & Ross 2010, 373-374). The writer both listened and read all the interviews with care and then started to mark all the parts the interviewee speaks about each cultural dimension in a way that relates to the framework of this thesis. The writer then began to make extracts to demonstrate what each interviewee thought about each researched cultural dimension.

5 Results of the field research

In this chapter, the results of the interviews for each research question through cultural dimensions will be answered based on the interviews the writer held. The writer will take extracts of the interviews that he conducted to the American players and the extracts will be demonstrated on each sub-section about each cultural dimension. The writer wanted to keep the context of the extract as much intact as possible to make the reader understand the message of how the interviewees intended it, but to understand the whole context in which each extract was said, the full interviews can be read in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

The writer wants to point out that only small part of the information from the interviews were represented in these results because the writer limited this thesis to include only the extracts where the interviewees were talking about the cultural differences in the way that related to the cultural dimensions by Hofstede or Trompenaars and related to the research sub-problems of this thesis. For lots of other interesting information about American football in Finland and in United States, the writer recommends reader to read the interviews in their entirety in the Appendix 1.

5.1 Research sub-problems and corresponding cultural dimensions

Before explaining the results of the interviews, the writer wants to point out that each research sub-problem will be explained in the cultural dimension part the research sub-problem relates to. Therefore each research sub-problem will be analyzed in these parts of this chapter:

- How do Finnish teams and players set goals different to American teams and players?
 - Analyzed in “Masculinity” and “Long-term orientation” of both cultures
- How do Finnish teams and players treat the failure to reach their goals different to American teams and players?
 - Analyzed in “Masculinity” of both cultures

- How willing are Finnish teams to try out new concepts and ideas compared to American teams?
 - Analyzed in “Uncertainty avoidance” of both cultures
- How do Finnish teams treat competition different to American teams?
 - Analyzed in “Masculinity” of both cultures
- How do Finnish players treat leadership positions in the team different to American players?
 - Analyzed in “Power distance” of both cultures
- How individualistic are Finnish players compared to American players?
 - Analyzed in “Individualism” of both cultures
- How do Finnish players communicate with their teammates different to American players?
 - Analyzed in how “Affective” are both cultures
- What is the relationship between teammates in Finnish and American culture on and off the field?
 - Analyzed in how “Specific” are both cultures
- In which ways is the game of American football played differently in Finland and United States?
 - Analyzed in miscellaneous parts when commenting about other cultural dimensions

5.2 Background information of the interviewees

All of the interviewees the writer interviewed fit the following criteria:

- Raised in United States
- Played American football in United States from youth to college level
- Played American football in a Finnish American football team for at least two seasons

- Interviewer knew each interviewee due to playing in the same team or playing in a local rival team in Helsinki Metropolitan area

5.3 Power Distance in both cultures

Power distance, the cultural dimension regarding how socially hierarchy oriented both cultures are, was very different between the two research groups, according to the interviews the writer held.

The power distance in American football team in United States was described the following ways:

"In the United States because of the game is taken so seriously and money is so involved, so we take those positions really seriously and consider them as the authority. (Harris 23.11.2018)

"A coach can make a difference in a player getting a scholarship. There were lots of players who lost their scholarship because a coach would tell a recruiter player may have 'bad attitude'." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"I played corner and told me they (coaches) didn't need me in anywhere else. So if I wasn't going to play cornerback, they're just not going to play me at all. Sometimes the coaches have a really big impact in your life and you sometimes you basically need to 'kiss their butts'." (Irvin 26.11.2018)

"The first practice she (interviewee's mom) told me about the coach that 'You do whatever that man tells you. You don't talk back. He's in charge. You treat him like he's me'. And that's how we're raised in this sport." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"In United States, you're taught at very young age that when you play this sport you respect the people in charge. One, they're usually volunteers. A lot of time people were taught by dads of someone in the team." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"When I was in college, my senior year in college, I was 23. My position coach was 24. He didn't play football in college. He immediately became an assistant coach. And he came in and he was a coach. I thought: 'this guy is my age'. But at the same time, we had no problem with respect. If he told me to do something, I did it." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

All of these interview extracts emphasize the cultural aspect that coaches in teams in United States have a lot of power and the culture expects to treat the coaches with respect. It was pointed out this is largely due to the fact that American football in United States is treated like a business high school upwards. However, even in youth football the respect is given to the coaches because the culture respects the people in power and someone who give their free time to coach a football team.

The power distance in Finnish American football teams were described with following ways:

“While in Finland the coach can easily be your best friend. So Finnish players take those positions more lightly because it’s still an amateur sport.” (Harris 23.11.2018)

“But even the (Finnish) coaches, they put a lot of emphasis from learning from the Americans because ‘It’s American game’. A lot of the time they almost give more respect to the American because ‘It’s American’.” (Irvin 26.11.2018)

“In Italy, they didn’t want leadership. And they didn’t have a culture. The problem was that they couldn’t take leadership and they couldn’t follow. They thought they knew it all but they didn’t. That was like what I liked in Finland. When they didn’t know something they were humble enough to say that.” (Stokes 9.1.2019)

“In Finland, American football is a hobby. So it’s all optional. There’s team captains, there’s coaches but the end of the day the players feel that they’re in charge what they want to do or not.” (Pervis 23.1.2019)

“These (Finnish) kids were verbally abusing us if we (coaches) verbally abused them. And their parents were there to allow it.” (Pervis 23.1.2019)

“For Finnish it’s also easier to teach Finnish player because they think ‘they’re in the same level’, but when American comes, and is paid, the coaches usually want to backseat and be more observant than outspoken.” (Harris 23.11.2018)

The reasons why the power distance in Finnish American football team can be considered low is that for example the coach does not have the right to say anything to the players without players being able to talk back. Meanwhile, the coach may give out his authority to a player in a team, if the coach feels like the player would know more about the game than the coach. As it was described in an interview, Finnish coaches put a lot of emphasis from learning from Americans because they expect the American import player to know more about the game of American football. In a higher power distance culture, it would be expected that a coach’s word is the law no matter what. The difference could be explained simply by pointing out that American football is an amateur sport in Finland, but in one interview the interviewee pointed out that for example in Italy, the team’s leadership didn’t want Americans to take the calls, even though the American players would have been more experienced. This implies that Finnish culture in general is inclined to give the power to a person who is the most knowledgeable about the subject and this implies for a low power distance in this respective cultural dimension.

According to Geert Hofstede’s scores, the difference between Finland and United States in power distance isn’t high but it’s important to notice how the game is played much more professionally in all levels in United States while the game is largely an amateur sport in

Finland. This could partly explain this large difference in power distance between the research groups of Finnish and American football teams.

5.4 Masculinity in both cultures

The “masculinity” cultural dimension describes how competitive is the culture.

The competitiveness of American football teams in United States in comparison to Finnish teams were described the following ways:

“But the limit is, as far as an American in the United States, you have a very slim chance of playing if you keep making same mistakes.” (Irvin 26.11.2018)

“I remember being in a bad situation in college. When everyone looked at me for the reason we lost a game we should have won. And it was one of the lowest moments I remember feeling in life. Because the whole university, even the girls around the school had something to say about it.” (Stokes 9.1.2019)

“I think in my entire 10 year European career I saw one fight in practice. In America if people weren’t fighting once or twice per month, something was off. It is extremely competitive. Sometimes we had coaches saying that ‘we’re gonna run until they fight’.” (Stokes 9.1.2019)

“In America, in lots of ways it’s straight up punishment or the next guy is up and you’re out that quick. You don’t have that pressure in Finland and that’s a good or bad depends how you look at it. That pressure demands excellence and weeds out lots of players who shouldn’t be playing. When you don’t have that pressure you can take easy but football is not a sport you can take easy.” (Stokes 9.1.2019)

“Americans usually take losing a little bit harder. You don’t see a lot of Americans both in Europe and in United States after a loss feel the need to let themselves to be okay with it. I actually think that’s something that Finland has right. It is just a sport and there’s nothing you can do after a loss. But Americans seem take it more personal.” (Pervis 23.1.2019)

“When you see the American imports here, after tough-fought wins the Finnish would ask them to celebrate and you see would see the more-seasoned Americans tell them they need to rest and recover. Even though they’re happy they’ve won, they know they have another game. Kind of goes back to the competition thing. Yeah, competition is great. I beat this opponent. But now I have another opponent. Only when I win the championship, it’s over.” (Pervis 23.1.2019)

“I remember asking my high school coach, who was also my fitness teacher. He said ‘fitness shouldn’t hurt, if it hurts you’re doing it wrong’. I said ‘hold on, ‘football hurts all the time’. He answered: ‘Oh no, football isn’t fitness. Football is torture’. They were genuinely torturing you until you understood that failure is not acceptable. And you cannot really hold people to the same standard when they don’t grow up in that environment when you come to Finland or anywhere in Europe... when you fail or you fall short. You may be upset about it but you can’t make the team run until they puke. Because a lot of the guys are paying to play or in such a voluntary position and there isn’t many people to take their position.” (Stokes 9.1.2019)

“When you’re in America, my college team, the first day there was 120 guys. So the head coach said to the strength and conditioning coach that ‘Hey, we need them down to 80’. So we ran until people quit. That was the type of competition, it was about who will survive. At the end we would have 50-60 people. But still compared to Finland, we would lucky to have 40 people. So when you’re already starting with such a small number... considering you have 11 players on the field,

having offense, defense and special teams. There's so many things you can do in so many positions, you need so many quality people and need more people to create the competition. So before you have those numbers, you're not going to have the same competition." (Stokes 9.1.2019)

"In the United States we get treated like crap, we get yelled at and we get told we should take it with football players." (Harris 23.11.2018)

The masculinity in Finnish American football teams was described the following ways:

"We lost but I'm still going to have good time, the game is over, nothing I can do about it.", (regarding to how Finnish often deal with losing) (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"Some (Finnish) teams have always been at the bottom. Some get comfortable for not achieving. But overall, not even just as athletes but overall the Finnish culture does not take giving up easily." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"I don't see people in Finland after losing being like 'whatever'. Most of the guys are mad because it's in the instinct of a Finnish man and a woman to want to succeed. That carries in our sport as well. The athletes take the same approach in football as they take in everyday life. If I don't get work done, I haven't done my job." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"From some experience with these (Finnish) coaches: They say 'It's okay, I want you to fail. So you can learn from there and get better.' (Irvin 26.11.2018)

"I really don't know how Finnish take losing. I know some guys are upset. But some guys just think that 'ah, next year'. Which I understand because it's a hobby for them." (Johnson 30.1.2019)

"In United States it's an easy thing. You either catch up or don't. There's a million players. Finland doesn't have that luxury." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

It is important to notice that American football is heavily aggressive and competitive sport in its nature. Therefore it would be assumed that anyone playing this sport would be a competitive person by their nature but it's still significant to notice that the interviewees did consider to be different ways of Finnish and American athletes treat competition. The culture in United States was described as heavily masculine in regards to American football. Examples of such heavily masculine traits is that failing in American culture is not accepted. Athletes were never okay with failure and neither were coaches since a player could easily lose their position by repeating same mistakes. Even spectators were described to be harsh with their criticism. The coaches were ready to push the players to their absolute limits, even to go as far as to make them fight in practices or make them feel tortured or punished. The competition was also described as ever-going in American culture and celebration was only in its place when the championship was reached.

In Finnish culture, the athletes would celebrate individual wins and therefore be okay with lesser goals. Finnish coaches were more understanding of athletes making mistakes, although this could be partly explained that the sport is much more an amateur sport so the

less is on the line. However, even though it is an amateur sport, one interviewee pointed out in the interview is that he thinks that even when Finnish are playing American football as an amateur sport, they take a lot of pride of wanting to be successful. Although Finnish culture was described somewhat competitive, comparing to the answers the interviewees gave about the American football culture in United States, it's nowhere close to the competitiveness of American culture.

According to Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, it was expected that American culture would be characterized as more competitive than Finnish culture. However, it is important to point out that because there is so much more players competing for spots in a team in United States and Finnish teams generally do not have that competition, the competitiveness will be in a different level due to circumstantial reasons.

5.5 Individualism in both cultures

Individualism describes how much a culture considers an individual has to take into consideration the groups they are in. Individualistic cultures expect individuals to take care of only themselves, while in collectivistic cultures an individual should take significant responsibility of their group. American football is a team sport so to be successful in the sport you have to take your team into consideration but how the individual player sees their team may still vary.

Individualism in both American and Finnish cultures were described the following ways:

"In the United States with this sport you can advance to make millions, so you see more individualism in the United States because as an individual you can progress. You can often see guys in the United States thinking 'Dang, we lost a big college game but I'm going to be a 1st round draft pick (for NFL) so I don't feel too bad'." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"I've seen Americans score four touchdowns (in Finland) and they lost. I doubt that American said 'We lost'. I'm sure he was saying that [explicit] should have helped me". (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"I think with the Finnish guys it's more of 'If we lost, we lost because we didn't play good enough as a team'. And if we won, it's because some guy stepped up more." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"I can't ever think of a Finnish guy scoring four touchdowns and saying that other guys should have stepped up. Their train of thought is 'I scored four touchdowns, we lost, maybe I could have scored five'. Or maybe the other team was just better. It keeps them a little bit more sane in that aspect." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"When the team isn't successful, American start to point out what people were unsuccessful. Not what the team did wrong. It's kind of 'We win as a team, we lose as individuals'. I think that's what

Americans bring. I try to not speak personally... But I've been known to do the same personally.” (Pervis 23.1.2019)

“I've been actually called for coach's office for not celebrating for someone who scored a touchdown. And I told them point blank that 'I don't like that guy'. Because he literally did things that are detrimental to my other teammates I was trying to protect.” (Stokes 9.1.2019)

The Americans, playing both in United States and in Finland, were described to be more individualistic than Finnish players. A collectivistic behavior seems to be considered virtuous in United States according to one interviewee, who pointed out that his coaches called him to their office for not celebrating a touchdown of their teammate. However, the individualism of American players can be seen that they see players are progressing as individuals and care about their future as an individuals, rather than being upset if their current college team didn't win. One interviewee also pointed out that even when American plays in Finland, if the American player feels like they did their work for their team, the player will point out that his team did not do enough to help them win. Finnish culture on the contrary was described as fairly collectivistic in that regard. If a Finnish player loses with his team, it was described that the player will reflect to his own performance first instead of pointing fingers towards his team.

According to Hofstede's theory, United States is the most individualistic country in the world and the comments about American players support American culture being highly individualistic. According to Hofstede's theory Finnish culture is also individualistic, although significantly less, but according to the interviews Finnish players believe in shared responsibility which makes Finnish culture a bit collectivistic in that regard.

5.6 Long-term orientation in both cultures

The writer wanted to research about the cultural dimension “long-term orientation” by asking the interviewees how American and Finnish teams set goals for their team in short-term and long-term. The interviewees started to focus on more about how teams and athletes set goals in general but in their answers left the “long-term orientation” aspect mostly unanswered. In addition some interviewees didn't take a firm position what do they think about this cultural aspect. The writer realized after the interviews he could have asked more specifying questions but didn't make these adjustments on the spot.

Long-term orientation was described in both cultures the following ways:

"In the United States it's never been a situation where a budget determines how good a coaching staff is or how good the players will get. So, a coach, when he's given a job in the United States he's given a contract long-term so he can have a plan and follow through with it." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"Here in Finland, I don't think people have long-term plans because it's unrealistic. We don't even know if the sport is going to exist in six or seven years. So Finnish approach is very short-term. It's about what can we do right now, how can we get to each goal right now." (Harris 23.11.2018)

Finnish culture was described short-term and American culture long-term in regards to American football but this was mostly due to circumstantial reasons. Because there's so much on the line what comes to American football in United States, the shareholders require trust from their coaches and expect a long-term plans when applying for the position. Meanwhile in Finland because the game itself is such a marginal sport and lots of teams struggle with having a big enough team to even play American football properly, Finnish teams approach the game of American football very short-term. However, it is important to point out that only one interviewee answered to the questions in a way that related to the long-term orientation cultural dimension and therefore a general consensus by the interviewees cannot be concluded.

5.7 Uncertainty avoidance in both cultures

Uncertainty avoidance refers to how much a culture is willing to try out new concepts and how much does a culture prefer to stick to what has proven to work. The interviewees described uncertainty avoidance in both cultures the following ways:

"That being said, the culture what I've seen in Finland is very practical. So to do things that are out there are challenged quite a bit because they want to do things practically and systematically. If you go off-script, it's not that you get a lot of negativity but you do see some hesitation. But in America that's part of the culture. They love the underdog stories where someone came in and did things differently and flipped the whole game up and that became the new normal. So I think there's a bit more leeway there and has a lot to do with just what we think and what we are accustomed to as a culture. American wants the new and crazy shiny thing all the time. In Finland, there's no such thing as a snow day. We just want things to work. No matter what happens. So it's easier to be a bit innovative and risk-taking in America." (Stokes 9.1.2019)

"I think that Finnish teams do, probably more than they should, try to change things a lot. But the most successful team are the ones that have the one way of doing and stick to the one way of doing." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"We've seen teams that have taken those big risks and it caused those teams not to have a program anymore. So I feel like Finns often take more risks than we take in the United States." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"A lot of Finnish people are stubborn even when they have been proven wrong (regarding managing their football organization, trying out new things and adapting)." (Pervis 23.1. 2019)

"In the United States it's never been a situation where a budget determines how good a coaching staff is or how good the players will get. So, a coach, when he's given a job in the United States he's given a contract long-term so he can have a plan and follow through with it." (Harris, J, 2018)

"I think that Finns are more open to new concepts, more than Americans. In American side they think they know it all and have it all already. When you want to implement something new in the United States it's going to be hard because they're so used to their rituals and stuff." (Irvin 26.11.2018)

"There's a lot of free coaching clinics, people are constantly evolving. You have teams that one year are a run-team and another year are a pass-team. You have NFL teams bringing college coaches to help them doing schemes. Innovation is what how you stay relevant in the United States." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"They called me to get a background test. I wasn't aware of that. If I knew that I would have stopped long time ago, not thinking I still had a chance. They asked me if something could pop up. You have to tell the truth, they're going to find out no matter what. I told them 'yeah' and they told me they would get back to me. The stuff I was in was enough for them to say that 'we can't have that for now'." (Regarding not getting a tryout for NFL-team Kansas City Chiefs) (Irvin 26.11.2018)

It is important to notice that the American players described Finnish and American culture both in regards to American football and also talking about the cultures in general. This is why it is important to distinguish when the interviewees were talking about each topic. American culture wasn't seen very uncertainty avoidant culture when speaking in general terms. Two interviewees pointed out it is very American to experience the new ways of doing things and that "innovation keeps you relevant". However, in regards to managing a football team, the culture seems to be fairly uncertainty avoidant. One interviewee pointed out that coaches in United States always need to have a long-term plan to be accepted as a coach. Also players who have had a troubled past may also seem to be a risk American professional teams do not want to take, as pointed out in one interview by their own personal experience. It is important to point out that as American football is such a large sport in United States and so much value is on the line that it seems like it's not an area that people like to do anything uncertain.

Finnish culture was described to be a practical culture, therefore quite uncertainty avoidant when speaking in general terms but Finnish American football teams weren't always described to be as uncertainty avoidant. One interviewee pointed out that some Finnish teams tend to change things a lot, which often may even backfire and the most consistent teams like to do the things in the ways that have proven to work.

Based on these answers it is hard to definitely point out whether one culture is more uncertainty avoidant due to conflicting opinions among interviewees but also because interviewees were not answering to the question in the same way, some focusing more on the Finnish culture in general and some focusing more on specifically Finnish American football teams.

5.8 How specific are both cultures

How specific a culture is regards to how far do the relationships with people extend. In this particular case, the point of the research is that do the relationships of teammates extend over American football, or do teammates matter to the players only when playing the game of American football.

How specific the relationships between players in both cultures are were described the following ways:

“I think that in the United States we’re closer because we’re kind of forced to. Because we spend all of our time together. We live in the dorms together, we practice together, and we eat lunch together. We’ve already established the brotherhood.” (Harris 23.11.2018)

“In the United States, it’s business. You could be gone anywhere and leave any second, or at last game you hurt yourself and be gone automatically. But here, it’s more of family and brotherhood because everyone is close and the population of football players is so small so it’s more of a tighter circle. The bond is different here as far as connecting with people. It’s more intimate. In the United States, I might never see you again (and it’s not a problem).” (Irvin 26.11.2018)

“My football teammates from American are still my best friends today. But I’ve played eight years in Finland... I have friends that I message on Facebook and things like that. But we don’t talk regularly and they don’t come to my kids’ birthdays or anything like that.” (Stokes 9.1.2019)

“But here in Finland a lot of the guys didn’t start playing until they were 19 or 20, they already had all their friends. They already knew everyone they were going to hang out with. I met a guy last summer who quit playing because all his friends were getting married and he wanted to be able to go to the weddings in summer. For me, it wouldn’t be possible. All my friends would be in the team. But a lot of his friends weren’t because he had all those friends before he started playing football. So here in Finland, the culture of American football is such a hobby that it’s separate from life.” (Pervis 23.1.2019)

“Once you make a team (in United States), you make a pack for life. When guys get married, when guys have kids, when guy dies, you see their high school teammates there. While in here (in Finland), I can change a team tomorrow and some of those guys I was friends with I might not be friends with anymore. Because the sport hasn’t caused us to be united that way.” (Harris 23.11.2018)

It is important to notice that the background differences of how the game of football is played in both countries are large, which were pointed out in the answers to this question.

In United States, people playing college football are close together because they live together. Also, because people often start to play American football in Finland at such old age, they've already established friendships with other people in their life and do not seek for friendships within the team as much. However, the interviewees did give their point of view how they see Finnish and American players being with their teammates outside of the football field. One interviewee pointed out that all of his American teammates to this day are his best friends while never been able to create deeper friendships in Finland with his teammates despite playing a long time in Finland. Meanwhile another interviewee pointed out that he feels as if Americans do not mind that they could be separated from their American college football teammates, and feels as if it's more of a tighter circle in Finland. According to the answers, more interviewees felt like it was more common that that game of American football had bonded teammates closer to life outside of football field in United States than in Finland, but the circumstances of how American football is played in both countries is largely different.

5.9 How affective are both cultures

Whether a culture is neutral or affective regards to the way people communicate in their culture and expect other people to communicate. In neutral cultures people are expected not to show a lot of emotion when communicating with each other, while in affective cultures showing emotions while communicating is accepted and rather expected. Whether Finnish or American cultures communicate affectively was described the following ways:

"With American guys you can be all over the face and they're not going to think anything about it. Because with American guys, it's not about the tone of the voice but about the message. With Finnish guys, if I get with big tone, they're going to take it in a different way." (Johnson 30.1.2019)

"Listen to the message, not the tone. As a Finnish guy... If you call me a [explicit] I'm taking it personally. Like you just went to my feelings. And when Finns are communicating with each other, they're talking but just talking. There's not going to be explicit that invoke emotion. Americans are going to use those explicit. Like when I'm talking here, I'm swearing a lot not because that I don't respect what I'm saying but it's that I'm talking passionately." (Pervis 23.1.2019)

"Sometimes you have to yell at people and give them that tough love but depending on your environment it's either 'hit or miss'. So you have to tread carefully out here (in Finland)... (regarding a successful player quitting due to harsh feedback in Finland)." (Stokes 9.1.2019)

"Well, I can say that the younger Finnish guys like to communicate more than the older guys. The older guys just want to do their jobs. It's not a bad trait to have because some people just don't like other people speak. So it's a good trait that Finnish don't do all that talking. Us American guys we're gonna do the talking, we try to get the guys going, it's just in our nature." (Johnson 30.1.2019)

"In the United States we get treated like crap, we get yelled at and we get told we should take it with football players. Finnish athletes are the same with each other, but because Americans don't know how to communicate with the language it gets 'watered down'. So the culture is almost the same but how we do it with each other (Finns and Americans) is different." (Harris 23.11.2018)

"Captain in America, when you don't do what you're supposed to do they get at your face and yell at you. A coach (in America) will tell you straight up that 'Get worried when I don't yell at you. When I don't yell at you, I'm done with you. When I yell at you, I still believe you can progress'." (Stokes 9.1.2019)

American culture in American football environment was described to be very affective according to the interviews. Two different interviewees pointed out in their interview that when American players communicate, they put emphasis on the message, rather than the tone. When using explicit communication in American culture, the person the message is directed is expected to take the message, rather than being offended on the possibly harsh tone. Finnish players were not described to accept this kind of explicit communication and were described to take those messages possibly as an offense towards them. Finnish players therefore expect a more neutral way of communication. It's expected in American environment that coaches yell at players and players in leadership positions will yell at their teammates when they're doing something wrong. Meanwhile, one interviewee pointed out this can be a risky thing to do in Finland as it may result a player quitting, as one interviewee pointed out in his interview. It's important to understand that American players are partly forced to take all the harsh way of communication in American football environment because there is so much competition, which means they either deal with the harsh communication or the next person will take their job. However, one interviewee pointed out that the American way of seeing is that when a coach is being harsh at a player and yelling at them, it means the coach still cares about them and expects them to progress.

6 Conclusions

In this chapter the writer concludes and summarizes the cultural differences of the two research groups and estimates the reliability and validity of the research of this thesis. Lastly, the writer analyzes his own project management and reflects his decisions he made to make this research for this thesis.

6.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability in the context of qualitative research is about whether the same results would come from this research if it was repeated (Jerome & Miller 1986, 5). If the questions were asked all in the same way, the writer argues that the answers for the most part would be similar, unless the interviewees would have experienced something different to change their opinion on things in the meantime. The interviews were held in a relatively quiet environment without distractions, which also makes the answers reliable. The writer acknowledges that it is debatable, whether the interview questions were optimal in this research but the writer considers that his interviewee questions for the most part measured properly the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars based on how he understood how these cultural dimensions should be interpreted. The interview questions in writer's opinion are appropriate questions to research about these cultural dimensions, only the wording could have been possibly reconsidered in some questions a little bit more to get answers more easily from the interviewees and stay on the intended topic a little bit more than the writer would have hoped.

Validity in the context of qualitative research is about whether the results of the research are correct (Jerome, K. & Miller, M, 1986, 5). The only way the validity of this research can be questioned is that if the writer, who conducted also the interview, understood something incorrectly what the interviewees said or meant with their answers. The writer does not expect this to be the case as because these interviews were done in a quiet, face-to-face environment, this gives the optimal circumstances to both communicate and understand what the other person is saying, both verbally and non-verbally.

6.2 Conclusions

It can be concluded that despite the cultural dimension scores of Finnish and American cultures are fairly similar according to Geert Hofstede's and Fons' Trompenaars cultural dimensions research, some notable differences could be pointed out from these two cultures according to the interviewees. These cultural differences were mostly in the area of power distance, individualism, masculinity, specific and diffuse aspect and neutral and affective aspect.

The cultural differences between the two research groups according to interviews can be summarized in the following ways:

Power distance: American culture was described to have notably higher power distance than Finnish culture. This means American culture is much more hierarchy oriented than Finnish culture.

Individualism: American culture was described to be more individualistic.

Masculinity: American culture was described much more masculine. This means the competitive nature of American culture was described to be much higher than the competitive nature of Finnish culture in American football.

Long-term orientation: Not enough interviewees answered the writer's question in a way that related to long-term orientation.

Uncertainty avoidance: Finnish culture was described more uncertainty avoidant when speaking about national culture in general, however in regards to the topic of American football American culture was considered in many ways more uncertainty avoidant.

Specific or diffuse: Finnish culture was described as more specific culture while American culture was more described as more diffuse culture. This means that American teammates are closer when being off the field while in Finnish culture teammates mostly interacted in American football related things.

Affective or neutral: American communication was described as very affective, whereas communication in Finnish culture was described to be more neutral. This means that American way of communication has more emotion in it, while Finnish expect a more neutral way of communication.

Finnish and American culture compared to each other according to interviews



- Lower in masculinity
- More collectivistic
- Lower in power distance
- More specific culture
- More neutral culture

- Higher in masculinity
- More individualistic
- Higher in power distance
- More diffuse culture
- More affective culture

It is important to distinct that the characteristics of these two cultures in this above table are only applicable in comparison to the other culture. For example, according to Trompenaars' theory American culture is also a specific culture compared to most other cultures but in comparison to Finnish culture it seems more diffuse. At the same time Finnish culture according to Geert Hofstede's theory is above average in individualism but compared to American culture it is somewhat collectivistic. American culture in comparison to Finnish culture was described to have high power distance according to the research interviews of this thesis, but has a fairly low index number in Hofstede's theory in this cultural dimension and thus it is expected that some other national cultures have even higher power distance. This is why these characteristics used in the above table cannot be used to characterize these countries compared to all the other cultures in the world: only compared to the other one, and only between these two research groups.

Because only two cultures were researched about in this interview, it is difficult to point out how significant these differences are compared to cultural differences compared some other cultures. This is why the significance of the cultural differences between Finnish and American culture can be only analyzed by analyzing the word choices used by the interviewees.

The writer also wants to point out that it is important to understand that lots of the cultural differences can be simply due to circumstantial differences. The biggest and most significant circumstantial difference is that American football has significantly higher competition in United States than it has in Finland in terms of number of athletes, and this means that the players act differently because they treat the case subject of American football with different significance. That's why it is impossible to distinct that how much in these two research groups the cultural differences are due to circumstantial differences, and how much is it different due to the ethnic cultural differences. The interviewees usually explained why they considered a cultural difference exists and the full context of their answers in the interviews can be read in Appendix 1. Because the reasoning for each cultural difference was based on the estimation of the interviewee, the writer considered that the reasons for each cultural difference cannot be concluded, only estimated. Therefore this research only concludes what are the cultural differences but cannot answer why these cultural differences exist.

6.3 Project management and own reflection

The writer began to work this thesis on October 2018 and finished in April 2019. The writer worked this thesis while finishing the last courses of his Bachelor's degree in Business Administrations. This thesis was the first larger scale research the writer has conducted and got the idea of a field research based thesis after the compulsory research methods course the students must take before starting to work on their thesis.

The writer considers he learned a lot about how to conduct a research properly and how to approach the research problems when making a cross-cultural analysis. The writer considers that working on this thesis taught a lot to him how to work when working in the area of cross-cultural management and qualitative research in general.

The writer considers the experience of making a research like this thesis a very fulfilling one. The writer thinks it taught him about the case subject of American football a lot more, taught about the cultural differences the writer hadn't imagined himself and also taught him to how to work as a researcher and a research interviewer in practice.

The writer also understands there were a lot of things to improve on if he was to make another research interview like the one conducted in this thesis. The word selections matter a lot when interviewing people and also understanding how much the interviewees are expected to give their time for an interview also affects a lot on how the interview should be structured.

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Appendix 1 – The research interviews

Interview with Jabari Harris:

Mikael: First to give some background, could you tell a little bit about your experience in football both in United States and in Finland?

Jabari: Okay, starting with the United States. In United States football is basically part of the culture. It's a sport that people embrace since they are young. Parents, grandparents and uncles they kind of push kids to push to be football players because it's such a popular sport in the country and there's a lot of benefits if you make it professional. So the sport is taken very seriously. We've never been able to play football here and it's been more of a hobby. Even in the Pop Warner leagues we played internationally and it was always high competition. From there you go to junior high school to high school to college. In college it almost feels like a business. Although you don't get paid to play but people pay your education, your food and your housing. So football in the United States is lot of pressure if you make it that far. If you're a high school student you're constantly so focused about your playing because you want a scholarship. When you are in college you want keep playing in a high level to keep your scholarship or possibly to get to the next level. In Finland football is not so much of a business and rather a hobby. In Finland I've been able to play for the love of the game and I didn't have to play because I have to do it for purpose. Comparing the two, the intensity to play in United States is much higher but the enjoyment in playing in Finland has been much better for me.

Mikael: So how long had you been playing in United States?

Jabari: Before coming to Finland I had been playing football for 15 years.

Mikael: How many years did your play in high school and college?

Jabari: Four years in high school and four years in college. It was eight years of highly competitive football.

Mikael: Now to continue to the cultural differences part of the interview. First question is: "How do Finnish people treat leadership positions like coach, team captain or team manager different to American players?"

Jabari: In the United States because of the game is taken so seriously and money is so involved, so we take those positions really seriously and consider them as *the authority*. While in Finland the coach can easily be your best friend. So Finnish players take those positions more lightly because it's still an amateur sport. So the players don't feel pressured or pushed from people in those positions because it's not so much of a professional sport. Also because players often pay to play so the managers appreciate the players than the players appreciate the management. It's the players who keep the team going. In the United States there's millions of people who invest to football and coaches are paid a lot to steer our career, so we look at people at top positions very important. A coach can make a difference in a player getting a scholarship. There were lots of players who lost

their scholarship because a coach would tell a recruiter player may have “bad attitude”. Here in Finland that is not a factor because the game is not integrated that way, because it revolves in clubs.

Mikael: So it's all about circumstances?

Jabari: Yes.

Mikael: Next question, how do Finnish teams treat practices differently to each other? For example, is the focus in practices more about constant competition against each other or more about personal skills improvement?

Jabari: It's combination of both. But I think in Finland because we have so little time to practice so we have such a small time to focus on skills development. When we get close to the season we need to concentrate to the competition. We don't need to rush that in the United States. We can do football in United States every day for four hours a day, while in here Finland we can only practice for a couple of hours, a couple of times per week. So coaches have such a limited time to script in what they want to improve on. So usually it's about the competition, because in the competition you can micro-manage the skill part, give little tips and let players go. So in that way I think it's more about competition here. In football you have to create a competitive nature to be successful at the sport. Skill comes with the time. Lot of things players have to do outside of practices. Here, weirdly, player can improve as much as he chooses. It's optional how much a Finnish athlete wants to use time for practicing, gym or any kind of skill work. For a coach, we've always designed a practice so we go through every phase of the game so the players know what to expect. But sometimes we lack in time in development of skills.

Mikael: Okay, then next question. In which ways is it different how Finnish and American teams set goals for their team, both in short-term and long-term?

Jabari: I talk about this with people all the time. I think that because here in Finland the finances is the biggest factor and that's what every team has to worry about. Do we have the budget to go this direction? In the United States it's never been a situation where a budget determines how good a coaching staff is or how good the players will get. So, a coach, when he's given a job in the United States he's given a contracts long-term so he can have a plan and follow through with it. Meanwhile here in Finland you can see a coaching and player changes every season. So some teams in Finland, the stable teams, they have long-term plans starting from the juniors and they have plans how they want to develop them so they can continue the program when it gets to the semi-professional level. In the United States, Pop Warner (youth-football) and upwards is all separated. So kids may play together as kids but go completely different high schools. When it gets to the high school it gets more structured and organized. Here in Finland you never know what you're going to get. Most Finnish coaches aren't paid. When you aren't paid, it's up to you how much effort you want to put. The good and stable teams in Finland, either they are able to compensate coaches and make it where it is professional for them, so they can develop plans and stick with the team. Or, every year they just get a person that's available and say “do what you to do”. In the United States, if you take Alabama's college team, for example: It's one of the best college football teams in college history and they have won several championships with the same coaching staff. They have a coach who is good at what he does, they have the money to support whatever he needs and they are able to get good recruits every year. They have a system. Here in Finland, I don't think people have long-term plans because it's unrealistic. We don't even know if the sport is going to exist in six or seven years. So Finnish approach is very short-term. It's about what can we do

right now, how can we get to each goal right now. And when we get closer to it, we can focus on the next year. In the United States, if a coach wants get a job in United States, he needs to give a plan for the next five years to even get accepted for the position.

Mikael: How about in the individual level? How is it different how we set individual goals to ourselves compared to Americans?

Jabari: Because in the United States it's such a high level sport, you're not always in control if you're going to make the team or not. Anyone here in Finland who wants to join a team, whether they played or not, can have an opportunity to be in a team. So there players who haven't played before really want to learn the sport. The players who understand the sport and understand the competition and they may set goals like "I'm going to be in national team" or "I'm going to be a Maple League star". But the overall body of players don't see football that way. And it's hard because these athletes have families and full time jobs. So for these players it's hard to wake up and say "I'm going to be the best football player in Finland". In United States football is the only focus, after the classes. I think that some Finnish athletes take it seriously, and they are the ones that are pretty good. But the most, it's not that they don't take it seriously, but they can't invest the time. It's mostly about how much responsibility one has. The younger players in Finland, who are just students and live with their parents, they come to lots of practices and come to all the camps and you can see how much their skill has developed. Especially compared to the ones who started in their 30s. Often the younger players may practice three times a week and some of the older ones miss because "life is".

Mikael: Alright, the next question. How do you think Finnish teams and players treat the failure to reach their goals compared to Americans?

Jabari: What I've seen here, it depends on the type of team they're playing. Some teams have always been at the bottom. Some get comfortable for not achieving. But overall, not even just as athletes but overall the Finnish culture does not take giving up easily. If you know what the country has gone through, I think the Finnish mentality is to never lose and never be in the bottom. Players usually take not achieving a goal really seriously. I don't see people in Finland after losing being like "whatever". Most of the guys are mad because it's in the instinct of a Finnish man and a woman to want to succeed. That carries in our sport as well. The athletes take the same approach in football as they take in everyday life. If I don't get work done, I haven't done my job. That's what I like about playing here. Even though it's an amateur sport, the people who have committed of doing have really committed to the sport. As a coach I've often had players asking me after a game "How did I do" because players care how they are performing.

Mikael: How much of it in terms of both cultures people consider their failure or success to be "because of their own doing" and how much is it considered being "outside of their control"?

Jabari: In the United States with this sport you can advance to make millions, so you see more individualism in the United States because as an individual you can progress. You can often see guys in the United States thinking "Dang, we lost a big college game but I'm going to be a 1st round draft pick (for NFL)" so I don't feel too bad. In Finland, you sacrifice so much. In Finland, football is played in summer and that's the only time you can enjoy life. So just imagine for three months you know that darkness is coming for next nine months, and these guys spent so much time to play American football. And they pay to do it. In some teams players pay a lot of money to play the

sport. So the winning and losing matters a lot because that's the only thing. Some guys get the opportunity to play in the national team but sometimes the national team does not recruit you from the losing team. The overall team success matters here because the team is your family, a brotherhood. People are the ones to build these teams. In United States there are so many people who invest and influence football "from outside". The success of the club is very important in Finland because very often players have their kids playing in their junior team underneath them, so the club is a family-thing, a dynasty. In college, we only leave behind our mark. We don't leave anything to our kids, or the generation after us. After college it's going to NFL, or going to a law-firm. Here you're already working while playing football. It's not getting to somewhere better but enjoying where you are right now.

Mikael: In which ways do you feel like Finnish players communicate differently with their teammates compared American players?

Jabari: Well, because we are in Finland the language barrier is something that always come into play. For Finns it's easier to communicate with Finns for that reason alone. Also, I think that some guys are a bit shy to ask from Americans because when Americans come here, they see that the Americans are "hot stuff": they've done it in the United States, they know a lot. So the Finnish more want to watch you, than to pick your brain. For Finnish it's also easier to teach Finnish player because they think "they're in the same level", but when American comes (and is paid), the coaches usually want to backseat and be more observant than outspoken. When Finnish athletes communicate together, they can do it better because they don't know all the football language. In Finnish, they can intake more so they communicate better together than with imports.

Mikael: Yeah, makes sense. However, I was thinking also whether Finnish people are more direct, more honest, or possibly ruder, than American players? Is there some kind of a distinctive thing?

Jabari: I think when Finns are talking together, they are very straight-forward and very honest. I think that's the same way we're towards each other in the United States. But it's weird when the Americans come here they baby the Finnish guys, because they think the Finns can't handle it. But in the United States we get treated like crap, we get yelled at and we get told we should take it with football players. Finnish athletes are the same with each other, but because Americans don't know how to communicate with the language it gets "watered down". So the culture is almost the same but how we do it with each other (Finns and Americans) is different.

Mikael: Makes sense. Is Finnish or American team culture more inclined to try new ideas and concepts, and if so which ways?

Jabari: I've seen here recently lots of teams doing things that they want to bring attraction to the team. It's very common that teams get new uniforms, get new imports, and start a new slogan because it's all about promoting here. You try to need to sell the tickets to get the income. You have different coaches and imports here every year. Football changes here a lot: Different kinds of play-books, different kinds of plays, even different types of culture. Imports from every year come from different places: One year you may get imports from Northern part of United States and one year you may get from the Southern part of United States. The import may bring a completely different element of culture to the team the teams will embrace. If you go to places like Seinäjoki, for example, which is far from the center, small city and everyone is compacted there and you bring imports to there – they learn and embrace a lot more from their import because there's not a lot around. Rather as in Helsinki, which is already very diverse and multicultural. So, it's very easy to come to

the capital and transition. I think that Finnish teams do, probably more than they should, try to change things a lot. But the most successful team are the ones that have the one way of doing and stick to the one way of doing. Like the (Helsinki) Roosters, they have done the one thing over and over and it works. That consistency tells that they have an identity and a plan. Other teams, who change a lot, do it because they don't have an identity for what they do and what want to be. That's why things are so often changing. It's not because they don't want to but they don't know the best for the team and the situation. You do have some who make changes for the better. It may be a new president, new coach, or a new import. So that's something that happens every year.

Mikael: So you feel like that Finns are not afraid of making those big changes?

Jabari: They're absolutely not. I think that they sometimes should be more calculated. We've seen teams that have taken those big risks and it caused those teams not to have a program anymore. So I feel like Finns often take more risks than we take in the United States.

Mikael: Alright, we're closing to the last ones. So, do you feel are teammates closer in Finnish or American culture when being outside of the football field?

Jabari: Oh, that's a tough one. I think that in the United States we're closer because we're kind of forced to. Because we spend all of our time together. We live in the dorms together, we practice together, and we eat lunch together. We've already established the brotherhood. We're more comfortable outside of football hanging together. But as in here, you see people only in practice because you have life outside of football. You can see that it's very seldom you see a whole football team here together. Rather in the United States, we're together all the time. Once you make a team, you make a pack for life. When guys get married, when guys have kids, when guy dies, you see their high school teammates there. While in here, I can change a team tomorrow and some of those guys I was friends with I might not be friends with anymore. Because the sport hasn't caused us to be united that way. But because this is a family and a club sport here, I wouldn't say we don't have that all, it's just a smaller percentage. In the United States, football is fraternity. If you play football in this college, you're an alumni. You're connected with everyone who have been part of that university. While in here you can play in any team any year, no one really cares. It's a smaller percentage of people who connect outside of football here. Weirdly, American imports spend time with their Finnish teammates even less. And it's because of the difficulty in communication. So American imports, playing even in different teams, they will connect with each other outside of football because they can understand the way. The Finnish culture is so different. Some of the things the Finnish athletes like to do is different. For example, sauna is "hot stuff" in Finland but not big in United States so American player might sit outside and wear boxers. So I think it's smaller percentage of players in Finland who bond outside of football field because it's about (lack of) time and we don't often even see each other that much in practices. It's even different how we identify each other in United States. When you meet a football player in the United States, you can relate to that person the same way like a person who has been in a military can relate to with someone who has been in the military. While in Finland you can tell someone you play American football and they respond with "Oh, me too" (with a mild tone).

Mikael: *laughs* Yeah, I totally get what you mean. And then the last scripted question: Do you feel that whether Finnish or American team culture puts more importance in group activities?

Jabari: Here in Finland not so much. Because the time is so limited, teams put the focus on football only. Here you can see that if people want to do outside of football field, they will do it as an individual and invite their teammates. Rarely do you see here in Finland that we throw a team barbecue for the team and the fans. While in the United States it was frequent we would do things as a team. In thanksgiving we would go feed the community, for example. In United States they believed if we do things off the field, we trust each other on the field. The significance to bond here isn't a big priority because we can't make it a big priority (for lack of time).

Interview with Eric Irwin

Mikael: First, just with your own words, please explain your experience in football both in the United States and in Finland.

Eric: In United States I started playing in 1997, when I was nine. I don't really remember being the biggest or the best or anything. At the time I was more observant and learning. Because football was new I didn't know how to put pads on or anything. Most of the time as a kid, it was just playing and have fun. It wasn't serious. But when you got to high school, it starts to get serious. You have to learn these plays and stuff and when you're not used to that, it's a whole different game then. I was very good back then but learning the plays (as a running back) and I had no idea what was going on. I was a starting player but I got in lot of trouble for not knowing the gaps and plays. Then I started playing cornerback, because it was less to think about. You had really only one assignment. I switched schools as a freshman year and move to another school. I played junior varsity and varsity. As a senior you play varsity but if you were good you were allowed to play one year before. I played both ways and I had two games per week, on Tuesday and Thursday. The pace in varsity and in junior varsity was much faster. The environment was so different. Lots of hype and lots of people in the stands and looking at you, it was nerve-wracking. In junior year, I only played varsity. It was difficult because I wanted to play multiple position besides cornerback, but that's where the business and politics in football come in. Sometimes they only wanted you to do one thing and you have to do what they say. I played corner and told me they didn't need me in anywhere else. So if I wasn't going to play cornerback, they're just not going to play me at all. Sometimes the coaches have a really big impact in your life and you sometimes you basically need to "kiss their butts". I kind of thought cornerback was always boring, being on one side of field, running straight and back-and-forth all the time. Then later, I wasn't too aware of that but you had to have good grades in school. If you didn't you could have got a mail from school to notify you about this. That was the business side of it and you had to have good grades throughout college. My grades were messed up. I was very good, got in second-team all-league. But I couldn't play because of my grades. I had to sit up that year and we lost in semi-finals. You learnt that if you wanted to play football you had to have your grades high enough. If you didn't have grades high enough to university, you had to

go to junior college. Junior college can be basically one year or two, but when it comes to the business side of it: If you didn't have the courses to get to a top school you had to do another year to finish your classes. My situation was kind of hard. I didn't really have any support when my grandma passed away. After that whatever offer came to me, I took it, in Division-2. I learnt the business side of it. You only got four-five years. Once you enroll to any college after high school, your clock starts. You're not eligible to play in Division-1 level if you took any classes. Now my opinions are already limited. I wasted two-three years just to try to find different schools to get to. There's not too much support to as far as helping getting you back and forth. I went to junior college and played for two seasons. I played five games. Back to one of those other situations: If you want to play something else, you have to ask a coach. If they don't let you, you have to play what they want you to play. In my head I figured that in order to get to a good school, you need to have stats. I was like "I need to switch to receiver". That's where you get all the shine and notice. I went as a receiver all spring, and was a starter all spring. First two games but then I was wondering why I'm not playing. Then it took one coach to take me side and told me that if you're not playing cornerback, you're not playing. I was thinking that "this is happening again". Corner is usually the weakest spot and it's hard to find guys that can play it. And when they find a player that can play it, they're going to force you to play that or you're not playing at all. So then I went to play cornerback and I ended up getting most honorable mentions, most valuable player in defense for the playoff game. I ended up playing five games. My sophomore year in junior college I got a scholarship to Southwestern Oklahoma State University. There it becomes more intense because all your time is now football. You have to be there all the time and you can't miss anything or they can kick you out. You're basically a slave. It was basically "football, class, back to the dorm", same thing all the time. It was cool, I was as a starter in spring 2011 for Southwestern Oklahoma. But the environment, I felt like it was boring up and I went back home for a girl *laughs*. So, I quit again. After that I worked for three years and life was boring. I thought I can't do this for anymore. Well, football is a business. If you have film and they like, they want to work with you. So I sent my film to another college. They liked me so they brought me up. That was 2013 and it was a private Christian school. All football is a business. You think it's supposed to be fun. From your experience you know they're going to play their favorites even when you know there's someone better. I was junior when I got there, because of my 2 years in junior college. In my first year... I can't remember the situation... I think I got in some trouble. I was suspended for a couple of games. After that it was me battling for a spot. I knew I was better than them but they were concerned if I was a troublemaker or any of that. They don't want any bad attitudes or bad behavior in their program or to be put in their school's name. Because of that I shared games in my junior year. There was this coach... I was in some other trouble the school didn't know about. I had an accident where I said I need to get early from some practices to get to classes. When the question came up to "Which classes is it?" I was in some trouble with the government. They wanted to see the charges and I showed them the charges but they were from two years ago. They suspended me again in my senior year. After that I was playing the rest. I did good enough to get a tryout to the Kansas City Chiefs (a National Football League professional team). They offered me a trial. They called me to get a background test. I wasn't aware of that. If I knew that I would have stopped long time ago, not thinking I still had a chance. They asked me if something could "pop up". You have to tell the truth, they're going to find out no matter what. I told them "yeah" and they told me they would get back to me. The stuff I was

in was enough for them to say that “we can’t have that for now”. With the all publicity going, we can’t have more than that. And there’s other guys who are just as good as you, same size, same speed, or better, and they come from bigger schools and don’t have any trouble so they’re going to pass you straight up. Football in the United States mostly looks like a business. They care to an extent – sometimes you’re able to create relationship with some coaches. But they want to keep their jobs, to keep their money, to keep their reputation. So they do everything in business sense. After that I took a year and half off, was depressed, I thought that was the end. I ended up taking a vacation in Finland. Jabari (Harris) told I could play here, so I thought “okay, I’ll play”. Here (in Finland), it has been fun but there’s also the business side. As far as the “EU status” and “American status”. You can only have two Americans. It’s kind of stressful because you have other rules, like the Finnish rules, like you can’t work without a permit. How am I supposed to play if I can’t work? And I’m not supported by the team, no money. And it gets down to business again and teams, or organizations, are trying to look out to see if they can get the best deals. The best deals, the best possibilities for the team. I’m not gonna say but... They don’t care too much about what they’re doing for you as long as they can get you to play. If they can get you to play for 5 dollars, they will get you to play for 5 dollars if they can get you to support the team and win for the team. It’s a little stressful in the business side of the football again. But football is football and that is the fun side of it. That’s why we still do it. Even though the business side is cut throat. It’s kind of like hell. Always have to do interviews for bosses. You’re competing all the time. So I played that year and more I had to put the mentality that I’m just going to help the team. I don’t really care about you guys, the business of organization. I know the team needs help, you like everybody and you get close with everybody so I thought might as well and go and finish out for them. It’s just shows that the business is the sad part about football. They don’t care about that much, they just want to look good for the organization members or something. So then after playing the other season, this previous season, I went through the same thing. I had talked about that I need some help with head coach, I started to ask when they’re starting to pay for me because I’m going to need some kind of help. They told me October or something, or in the spring or winter and I expected that “cool, we’re already established that so I’m getting some kind of help this time”. Then later on I found out that they assumed I play for free so they did some sneaky stuff behind my back so they went to get other Americans imports. It gets back to the business side, if we can get this American count as an “EU dude” we can get another American to get a better chance to win. It’s kind of a sneaky thing to do. The experience was kind of frustrating because it’s now me and this other guy and we don’t know who is playing. We’ve invested a part of life for this and you don’t know what’s going to happen. What kept me going was the relationship between the teammates. But the business side, I can’t stand of football. So I did my part, even though I did quit, I’m pretty sure you remember that (directed at the interviewer). At some point, the business side is just that you can’t let them take advantage that. But the team needs help, so I decided to go back. So we finished out, had good time and so on. After that the organization realized he’s a good player, he helped us a lot. This time we won’t make him pay for free, we need him. So they tried to get you back. Another team was already interested, I’ve played against them. They know what I can do. Now it’s like “they wanted to play for the other team” so they’re fighting back and forth that who is going to get who. But it seemed like at the same time they were talking about it outside. Now with SAJL (the Finnish Association of American Football), now this board, business side had been talking about how “we had got him for free, you might

get him too". So, when you talked with some of the coaches they've told that "the imports are getting a minimum of thousand or something". We've already expressed verbally that you're helping me with something. You don't need to help me with housing, transportation, food... just with something. That was a verbal agreement. When it got to the contract, business stuff, it's a... Well, my experience was different to everybody. When we sat down the paper basically said "you have zero fees and no responsibilities". I signed it thinking that this is not the contract that maybe they talk to me later about it. But they did something that was sneaky on the business side. To get what we can but save the budget. Get the best team for the cheapest amount. So this team wanted to do the same thing. But when it comes down to football and I'm playing with the team, it's fun, so that takes over for me. So the experience for me it's that football is a lot of fun but in the business side it's cut throat and serious.

Mikael: Wow, you covered so many things. Thank you so much for such a comprehensive explanation. But for the sake of my, to make it clear, I might ask some things that you already kind of covered. But now is the part where I find out the cultural differences between Finnish and the Americans. So the first question... you already talked about the cultures but the first question is that "How do you feel like Finnish players treat leadership positions like coach, team captain different to American players?"

Eric: Well... The difference I think is that the Finnish football organization is kind of new, well it's kind of old but still new and growing. When you look at Finnish coaches and players they're less knowledgeable on the subject, so when you have Americans come here they might brush off what the Finnish coach has said because supposedly "we [Americans] have more knowledge and experience and stuff". But anyone can learn the game, it's just learning. But even the coaches, they put a lot of emphasis from learning from the Americans because "It's American game". The difference is... A lot of the time they almost give more respect to the American because "It's American". But for me there's good coaches and players everywhere, so it's doesn't matter... You gotta buy in to the system and roll with people you're with. So I don't really know...

[Mikael leads to the next question but is interrupted with a knock on the door, the reservation time of the room had ended so the venue for rest of the interview had to be changed]

Mikael: Alright, take two of Eric's interview. So, question two is that "How do you think that Finnish and American treat practices differently to each other? For example is the focus more on constant competition against each other or is it more about personal skills improvement?"

Eric: I think it's more about personal skills improvement. Practice here is kind of different... I had to understand it differently because most of the players here have to work. In the United States, football is your job. So you have more practices, maybe four-five times per week. People have families and jobs so sometimes practices are limited to two per week. So it's really supposed to be more intense and more practices but because of the "small" difference that you have to work in order to provide and play... So when you get to practice as a Finnish player it's more about to perfecting your skills and mastering your craft. If you can get yourself better, you can compete with others good. So the competition is more about when you're in the game. In practice it's more about that everyone wants to get better.

Mikael: Alright, so the next question. In which ways is it different how Finnish and American teams set goals for their team, both in short-term and long-term?

Eric: Short-term...so far is that... Well what coaches the stress is on that how many players we can get in for practices. If we can get everyone to practice, we have more time to develop together...

Mikael: In the long run?

Eric: Yeah. But as far on the long-term goals I think it's more on "If we play together then we'll do good we can grow together, so we could work better together when the games come and progress through the season"

Mikael: So when we do the short-term things right we get to the long-term goals?

Eric: Yeah.

Mikael: Okay. How do you... well... considering the big size difference but how do feel like this applies in the United States?

Eric: Big size as far as in...?

Mikael: No I mean, that the schools has so many players and all of that. So their focus is not the same but how you feel like they set the goals?

Eric: As far as getting a big organization?

Mikael: No, just setting goals for your team both in long and short-term?

Eric: I think they have to see what they have to work with before they can really plan and set their goals. Because sometimes when we start winter practice, first couple of weeks there's few players so it's hard for them to see where they stand as a team. Later on when people come they can see what is their potential as a team and where they need missing part or need help. I think that when they feel what they have as a team, they base their decisions of how good they can be or what's their potential, stuff like that.

Mikael: Alright. Then the next one, it's pretty close but... But, how do you feel like Finnish and American players set goals to them individually, different to each other?

Eric: For Finnish people I think that there's a lot on their back. They've already looked at as in disadvantage because it's "an American sport". So their goal is to do their best, stand out and play. They want to play no matter what. I kind of want to give for Finnish more respect because it takes a lot to pay to play. If you were in United States and you had to pay to play, there would be a lot less football players. So... can you ask me the question again?

Mikael: In which ways is it different how Finnish and American players set goals for themselves individually?

Eric: Okay. So I think that Finnish players are trying to prove that they can play even though it's an American sport. Then the Americans, they often come here from the United States and try again to make it big. So, they want to come here and be the best they can be and hopefully some opportunities will open up for them. But I also think that the Finnish players are trying to do the same thing because you're in the football game, you want to see where it takes you. So, both try to be the best they can be so they can have more opportunities.

Mikael: Alright, next one is: In which ways do you think Finnish and American players treat failure to reach their goals differently?

Eric: From some experience with these coaches: They say "It's okay, I want you to fail. So you can learn from there and get better."

Mikael: From Finnish?

Eric: Yeah. But in the United States... It goes more to the business side. If I tell you to do that and you do this and you keep making the same mistake over again, you're not going to play or do anything. But failure, you've got to learn from those failure. The more you do it, the better you get. But the limit is, as far as American in the United States, you have a very slim chance of playing if you keep making same mistakes. But here if you make mistakes but you're trying hard they will give you "the okay" because they know the mistakes will happen.

Mikael: Okay. Well, how much do you think that Finnish and American team culture consider success or failure to be because of their own doing and how much is it outside of their control?

Eric: From both sides, Americans and Finns?

Mikael: Yeah.

Eric: For Americans it's more of... It gets back more to the business and politics. Sometimes we think that everything is on our hands and we can do anything we want. But also it's not because external factors play a big part in our lives. Americans could say that "someone messed my chances up". But it could go either way because they can also say that "Well, if I did this it would have been different" but then they also like put the blame on external factors. As far as Finnish... Can you repeat the question again?

Mikael: How much do you think, well, in this case Finnish team culture considers success or failure to be their own doing and how much is it outside of their control?

Eric: Okay, for Finnish it's more about where are they in their environment. They don't have all the resources like the Americans do. So they already feel limited in their progress. They don't have the American coaching or resources. But it's still self-development that could work. Because as long as you can play, you will get noticed, they will find you. So you can develop yourself.

Mikael: So they're like weighting on how much resources they have...?

Eric: Yeah, they often blame often for the lack of resources too.

Mikael: Okay next one is that: In which ways is different how Finnish players communicate with their teammates, compared by American players?

Eric: Okay. In the United States, it's business. You could be gone anywhere and leave any second, or at last game you hurt yourself and be gone automatically. But here, it's more of family and brotherhood because everyone is close and the population of football players is so small so it's more of a tighter circle. The bond is different here as far as connecting with people. It's more intimate. In the United States, I might never see you again...

Mikael: And it's not even a problem?

Eric: Yeah. And they're more... First it's competition. We're cool because we're on the same team but I don't care for you too much. I've got to do my own job and do my part. But here it's smaller and closer and different as far as connecting. Because everybody lives so close and there's so few teams. When you play football you almost know every other football player. So in Finland it's more family-bonded and more business-sided in United States.

Mikael: Okay, then the next one is: Is either Finnish or American team culture more inclined to try new ideas and concepts and if so in which ways?

Eric: I think that Finns are more open to new concepts, more than Americans. In American side they think they know it all and have it all already. When you want to implement something new in the United States it's going to be hard because they're so used to their rituals and stuff.

Mikael: So they think they already have it?

Eric: Yeah. So Finnish people, they're more acceptable to learning new stuff.

Mikael: Because we think we don't know everything yet?

Eric: Yeah.

Mikael: Yeah, makes sense. Alright, then the next one. Are teammates significantly closer in Finnish or American culture when being outside of the football field?

Eric: Finland definitely "wins" that. Here, like I said, it's much closer together. The big population of football players is in Helsinki. First you have practice, and practice is limited, let's go have good time and chill after the practices. That's the connection and family part of it. The bondage is stronger. In the United States, it's more spread out. You might go on your way and I might not see except when we get to practice because there's so many different things people are doing and you might not connect there. [One sentence I didn't understand]

Mikael: Right. Well, this is kind of related and also the last question. But do you feel like Finnish team culture puts more significance to group activities...?

Eric: Yes, definitely. Like for example, the "beer ball". Let's have some fun. We've practiced and we put work when we have to but it doesn't all have to be work, let's also have some fun. Let's bond together. And that brings you closer together as a team. And when you're closer together outside, it brings closer on the field. You learn to trust each other more and you would basically put your life on the line more on the field for your brothers. But in the United States, these dudes are living far Florida to California so "We're cool on the field we don't know each other outside very much". So it's much better in here, as far as that.

Interview with Stephen Stokes

Mikael: Alright, here we go. Interview with Mr. Stephen Stokes...

Stephen: Mister Coach.

Mikael: Mister Coach Stokes. Yeah, so the first part of the interview – just want to get a little bit of background information of you playing in the United States and playing in Finland and about football in general. So how would you describe with your own words?

Stephen: A little bit of information or do you want the whole spill, like my whole background?

Mikael: As elaborate as you want. Doesn't have to be too elaborate. Just to know how long have you been playing in the United States and what places, like high school and college you played.

Stephen: Okay. Well, I played football for 25 years. I got into football because my older brother was playing football and my dad was coaching him. I was just following in the footsteps, trying' own up to them. My dad left the family. I think a large part of me kept playing because I figured that the better I play maybe he would come back some day. And it was an easy area I would get respect from my older brother. The more I can do there the more he respected who I was. I remember in high school, I was always very undersized and small. I remember being told... You know when they ask me "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I just kind of said "I want to be a football player". And every response from every adult was "You're too small. And the percentage of people

who make it playing football is less than one percentage". So it was a lot of negativity. I didn't take it personal but I also took it as a challenge. Like "(explicit) you, I don't care for your statistics. I want to be someone". And it just drove me. And it was something tangible I could work on. And... I wasn't really good. I wasn't good until probably my sophomore year in high school when I kind of started to figure out who I was as a football player. When my family moved and we changed locations, it really started to click for me. I started to take it seriously. I got a weight set on my garage and worked out all the time in my local park. I was the co-MVP (most valuable player) and multiple guys in my school got scholarships to UCLA and Texas and I had nothing. It didn't make much sense that I was the best in my team and they got scholarships and I didn't. But it all came down to because I was too small, like what people told me before. So I went to junior college. Same thing, did well but didn't get a lot of opportunities after that. So I jumped on the first real opportunity that came. And it was terrible. It was in Detroit, playing for Wayne State. It was just awful. So bad I gave up the scholarship and drove away in blizzard. Then I went and finished my college career in Eastern Oregon, which is a small school. And often in college I played out of position. I wasn't doing what I was supposed to do. I only did what I was supposed for the first two months of college and my last three games of my first season, which is play running back. Other than that, I never got to play running back. I played out of position because I was a smart football player and I just wanted to play and I was a team player. But that did more harm than good and it didn't bring me happiness. I was happy for playing but something was off. So when I finished, I actually gave up football. I was a rapper, I was doing music. That's what I studied. For a few months I gave up football until I started coaching high school football. Gave me the bug again, I thought I'll give this one more shot. I realized I wasn't going to grow so "Let me control what I can control" that was actually the motto for the coach I was coaching for. He actually played for the Helsinki Roosters back in the 1980s. And that was weird because I didn't know that at all until I broke all his records when I came to Helsinki. But his motto was "Control what you can control". What I could control was my speed and that was something I never paid attention to. I always controlled my strength. I trained really hard but I just didn't train speed. When I changed my approach and just focused on speed. And when I did that, everything changed. I got to CFL (Canadian Football League) and I got cut... because of speed. It was one play where I hesitated. And that split second basically ended my CFL career – not trusting the speed I had. But that was something that was new to me. I didn't think of being a fast person. But that lit a fire in me because not only I was could prove I could play football but I was also the fastest guy out there. The more I worked on speed the more success I had. I played in Germany, Italy and ended up in Finland. Finland was the first real place... well, I'll take that back. Germany told me "You're running back. Be a running back". And I hadn't had that all my career, especially after high school. And I loved it, that must have been the happiest I've ever been. It was kind of a farm team. They had different colored helmets and cheap uniforms. We had to set up the goal posts before the game. I didn't have a prestigious contract or anything. I was getting the bare minimum a player is getting from coming overseas. But I just got to play running back and I frigging loved it. This Europe thing seems to be something right up my alley. So where is the biggest and baddest place I can go? So there was a book written about the team I was going to. It was supposed to be the "cream of the crop". It was terrible. It was comparable for the experience in Detroit. In both of these experiences I had good coaching before I went to these places. And I've been part of good programs and nice people before I went to these places. So because I knew what

good is... I also knew what [explicit] is when you see it. And we were in a lot of [explicit], for the lack of a better term. And in this team in Italy I was in, we won the Italian Super Bowl – it was just managed so poorly and we weren't treated like human beings. I thought I was done with Europe. But I happened to be a roommate with someone who happened to play for Helsinki Roosters. And he spoke so highly about Finland. Just the time he had here... not winning the way we wanted in Italy but being treated like a person. So I said: You know what, I'm done with Europe after that. The only things I will entertain is maybe going back to Germany because I enjoyed my time there. Austria, because we played against Austria in Italy and they did it with really high standard what I really appreciated. And Finland because of what he said. Only three places I would even entertain. I turned down like 20 offers. Didn't even care anymore, don't want to come back. But then Finland reached out and I was kind of rude. I was like: "So you're going to pay me and I'm going to do this and that". And they were like "Okay!". Well then I thought "Well alright", I didn't really expect that because that wasn't the response I had before. I had to negotiate before and all that. But I came here... it was rocky. We lost our first three-four games. The team didn't really know who they were. But the guy just told me "Hey, this is your team. Lead, they will follow". I've never been a vocal person. But ever since that point I had to start speak out and be a big leader. And ever since I didn't stop talking and that's how I got to coaching. And basically leading the same team I was in for 7-8 years. I just kept coming back to Finland, then met my wife and got stuck here. So that's it, in a long nutshell.

Mikael: Yeah, thank you very much – that was very comprehensive. But I have the 10 cultural differences questions I have. And you can try to answer them as best as you think you can. So the first one is that "How do Finnish players treat leadership positions like coach or team captain different to American players?"

Stephen: Because they (Finnish) don't grow up in the same culture of football, I don't think they don't strive to be leaders, to be captains the same way kids do in United States. It's something you would aspire for. I remember being a captain for every college team I was in, despite playing out of position. I wasn't very vocal but that was the way I carried myself and something I was very proud of. And I know guys who really wanted to be captains and be the guy to call the shots and being leaned on when stuff got tough. Didn't see that a lot when I came to Finland. Now the issue was we had that when we lost our first three or four games because I wasn't a very vocal guy and no one wanted to step up and lead... while they wanted someone to lead them. And I think that's the difference. In America, everyone wants to lead. In Finland they admit to the fact they're a bit foreign to the sport so they admit that "We need leadership". I didn't run to a lot of guys who stepped up as leader, only very few guys in Finland I bumped into that I thought really wants to "wear that kind of hat". If we look it from the whole international perspective... In Italy, they didn't want leadership. And they didn't have a culture. The problem was that they couldn't take leadership and they couldn't follow. They thought they knew it all but they didn't. That was like what I liked in Finland. When they didn't know something they were humble enough to say that. And if you could help them, they would take the help. And when you're away from home and you genuinely want to help somebody, and you're paid to do it, you want to help to be well received. So that was something that was good about Finland... players were extremely coachable. I would like to see some more, especially the players who go to America and come back, I want to see more and more leaders.

Mikael: Alright. Well, the next question is "How do Finnish and American teams treat practices differently to each other. For example, is the focus in practices about constant competition or personal skills improvement?"

Stephen: The biggest difference is time. Like, football is a religion in lot of America. When I played high school football we practiced Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Friday we had a game. And in Friday you weren't allowed to leave a school. You weren't able to leave the room until we got taken to the game by bus. And Saturday morning we had a practice. As a 14-18 year old kid, you're basically spending six days of a week at least three hours a day on a football field. Developing skills. The competition happens when the season starts. It gets extremely competitive to see who is the starter or who has what. When the season starts it's about maintaining. Are we keeping ourselves healthy enough to play and what is our plan to attack our opponents. Complete transformation in the way I had to think, approach and adapt to is that in Europe it's luxury to have three practices per week. You're maybe going to see two practices for two hours per week compared to six practices for three hours in America. There's so much more time put into it in America. That's why it's the cream of the crop what comes to football. It's not to say that Finns are not dedicated and don't have the type of initiative but... I think in my entire 10 year European career I saw one fight in practice. In America if people weren't fighting once or twice per month, something was off. It is extremely competitive... Sometimes we had coaches to say that "We're gonna run until they fight". It's "fight or flight". I'm either gonna step up to the challenge or flight. But at the end of the day it's still the same strategy in place. We need to develop skills and take advantage or what our opponents do. But film time alone... In America we would watch film each of those six times per week. Watching film was in any place in Europe, especially in Finland, was not a common practice for lots of the organizations I was part of. Maybe only when it was the last couple of games in Finland, when everything was on the line. But it was not a common practice for teams to get together and study their opponent. And yeah, it's not a lot of competition in practices in here. Like fighting for a spot. And that's something I'd like to see change here too. But it comes with depth. That's a big thing too. When you're in America, my college team, the first day there was 120 guys. So the head coach said to the strength and conditioning coach that "Hey, we need them down to 80". So we ran until people quit. That was the type of competition, it was about who will survive. At the end we would have 50-60 people. But still compared to Finland, we would lucky to have 40 people. So when you're already starting with such a small number... considering you have 11 players on the field, having offense, defense and special teams. There's so many things you can do in so many positions, you need so many quality people and need more people to create the competition. So before you have those numbers, you're not going to have the same competition.

Mikael: Okay. So the next question is "In which ways is it different how Finnish and American teams set goals for their team, both short-term and long-term?"

Stephen: Okay, well goals are goals. That doesn't differentiate from where you are geographically. But I will say... Well, again it depends on the personnel. What you have in hand. So when a coach sits down and see that these are my players, this is what I could get done... you set your expectations towards that. And the players feed off the coach if they are realistic expectations or not. So really depends of your circumstances and your situations. If you're from a prestigious program your goal is to win and everything short of that is a failure. If you're from a program that's about building,

your goal is to build. And winning is a by-product of that and makes it all the better. But it isn't the main focus. But I think that's much more situational than geographical.

Mikael: Right, yeah. Well how about in individual level? Is there differences how people set goals for themselves individually?

Stephen: Oh, absolutely. (In United States), you grow as a little kid. You see what's out there and what you aspire to be. And football players are everywhere. Personalities, what you see in TV... like I said, it's a religion. People in really young age training really hard and often misguided. But still it's ingrained in their brain that "this is what I want to be". Most kids that I've seen that have actually done anything in Finland just got introduced to the sport when they saw it Youtube. They don't have a large platform because football isn't that big. They don't have a place where they hone their skills, or know how to train or know who to reach. So, I don't think there's a lot of Finnish kids who aspire to be the "next guy" in NFL. It's very very few. But when you school to any school in America, throw a rock and hit ten kids that could be the next quarterback for (Dallas) Cowboys or something. It's completely different. It's almost anomaly to find a kid here who wants to do that. When you see a player in here, they mostly want to be a part of the team. They don't even rationalize the thought that "this could give me a scholarship to play football in America" or to give me a paycheck. I've helped a few players to leave Finland or even go to Germany, Italy, France, Denmark, Sweden... different places paying for them to come to play for a while. But that to be an option for them... they don't think about out it really until they're adults.

Mikael: Alright. Then the next one is "In which ways do you think Finnish and American teams and players treat failure to reach their goals differently?"

Stephen: Hmm. I think it's difficult because... you have this expectation in America to win. It really depends on the coaching but. When you did fail... I remember distinctively failing in college. And not even on the field but in high school. In high school I got a bad grade. So they put us in what they called "F group". If you grades were up to certain par, you couldn't play. Because football was part of school. So you had to have a certain level. So if you were in danger of that, they put you in "F group". So the "F group" would do rolls of 100 yards when you feel like you would throw up. Or you did bearcrawl until you can't move anymore. I remember asking my high school coach, who was also my fitness teacher. He said "fitness shouldn't hurt, if it hurts you're doing it wrong". I said "hold on, football hurts all the time". He answered: "Oh no, football isn't fitness. Football is torture". They were genuinely torturing you until you understood that failure is not acceptable. And you cannot really hold people to the same standard when they don't grow up in that environment when you come to Finland or anywhere in Europe... when you fail or you fall short. You may be upset about it but you can't make the team run until they puke. Because a lot of the guys are paying to play or in such a voluntary position and there isn't many people to take their position. There's no real worry that "If I don't step up, I'll lose my spot". That's a big letdown in life. I remember being in a bad situation in college. When everyone looked at me for the reason we lost a game we should have won. And it was one of the lowest moments I remember feeling in life. Because the whole university, even the girls around the school had something to say. Like hey, it wasn't my fault... But everyone has that expectation of you because it's that culture around you. So no one in here would know anything except the people in the locker room. So, the coach treat with failure in different ways. In America, in lots of ways it's straight up punishment or the next guy is up and you're out that quick. You don't have that pressure in Finland and that's a good or bad depends how you look at it. That

pressure demands excellence and weeds out lots of players who shouldn't be playing. When you don't have that pressure you can take easy but football is not a sport you can take easy.

Mikael: Alright, how much do you think Finnish and American team culture considers success or failure to be because of their own doing, and how much is it considered to be outside of their control?

Stephen: I'll go back to what my coach said. "Control what you can control". Or what Jay-Z says, "play with skill and good luck will happen". You'll see guys when the game is on the line and it's coming down to the last play, they're taking a knee and praying in America. That's because religion is bigger in America as well... but when you come to Europe religion isn't a big thing and... you don't have that same emotion like "we can get lucky" or "something can go our way". But those are moments in football game, the last second moment when something can change. But a football game is three hours long. Any coach that tells you that "Maybe it might go our way" or "if we're lucky we can get this one". They're full of [explicit]. I mean, it really comes to how you prepare and what you put into it. There's no offseason in football. There's the season and get-ready-season. When you get ready the way you're supposed to... it's like showing up to a test. If I've studied and I know my material and I know the topic and when I show up, I don't feel anxiety. I don't think "I might get lucky and pass the test". I know my stuff and will pass the test. But if you're ill prepared and hope things are going to happen, that very rarely happens in football. Game is so long and so many things happen so the game tells the truth. That's what I always say. [explicit] hope. Hustle. That you can control over, hope you can't control over. Luck is not going to get you consistency, no matter where you are.

Mikael: Alright, well which ways do you feel like Finnish players communicate differently with their teammates compared to communication by Americans?

Stephen: They speak Finnish.

Mikael: Well, I guess more in the sense of "which way do you talk"... I mean like when they're talking with...

Stephen: Yeah, you know I'm joking...

Mikael: Yeah...

Stephen: But what I can see, but that's what I'm saying a lot of gets lost when they speak in Finnish. But it gets back to question about leadership. As a leader, if I see someone getting stepping out of line, not doing their job. You have 11 guys on the field, it's all about trust. If I don't trust someone to do their job, I'm going to their job. And I when I do their job, I'm not doing my job. That's never a recipe for success. But when you trust people, celebrate with people, when they are successful... but when they fall short you should be able to talk to them with respect but with accountability. There's a fine line between that. Captain in America, when you don't do what you're supposed to do they get at your face and yell at you. A coach will tell you straight up that "Get worried when I don't yell at you. When I don't yell at you, I'm done with you. When I yell at you, I still believe you can progress." But yelling at a kid, again who doesn't have a kid behind him fighting for the spot... yelling at a kid who don't have to deal with that stress and that negative emotional side with failure... it's a lot harder to yell at that person and it's harder to be aggressive with them. When you have different expectations and motivations why they are playing. I remember that, my first year in Helsinki. A teammate of mine made mistake, he fumbled the ball, he recovered it got up,

and started dancing. I cussed him out and asked “What the [explicit] are you doing? You’re celebrating a mistake and almost caused us something. Get back in the huddle and let’s fix this.” I never saw the guy on the football field after that. He hang it up and the whole career done after that. This guy was in NFL Europe, he had been playing for a while and did things. And I wasn’t trying to be negative at him. I was just trying to show him the right way to carry yourself on the field. Celebrate when we do something right, not when you get lucky. And he just quit. And that’s the difference – you can tell a guy who really wants to “be there”, really wants to aspire... get to NFL or move on. That won’t break them, it will get them a reality check. But that broke him so I had to change my approach. Sometimes you have to yell at people and give them that “tough love” but depending on your environment it’s either “hit or miss”. So you have to tread carefully out here.

Mikael: Right. Alright, next one is “Is Finnish or American team culture more inclined to try out new concepts or ideas, and if so in which way?”

Stephen: Well they have the term that “Everything under the sun has been done”. So doing a new idea or concept... teams always try that and fail. If you’re doing something that works, no matter where you are, if it’s not broke don’t fix it. But if you aren’t having success, you’re inclined to try out new things, different things. That being said, the culture what I’ve seen in Finland is very practical. So to do things that are out there are challenged quite a bit because they want to do things practically and systematically. If you go off-script, it’s not that you get a lot of negativity but you do see some hesitation. But in America that’s part of the culture. They love the underdog stories where someone came in and did things differently and flipped the whole game up and that became the new normal. So I think there’s a bit more leeway there and has a lot to do with just... what we think and what we are accustomed to as a culture. American wants the new and crazy shiny thing all the time. In Finland, there’s no such thing as a snow day. We just want things to work. No matter what happens. So it’s easier to be a bit innovative and risk-taking in America.

Mikael: Alright. We’re closing kind to the last ones. But the ninth one is that “Are teammates closer in American or Finnish culture when being outside of the football field?”

Stephen: That’s hard to say as an international player. My football teammates from American are still my best friends today. But I’ve played eight years in Finland... I have friends that I message on Facebook and things like that. But we don’t talk regularly and they don’t come to my kids’ birthdays or anything like that. That being said, I don’t know how Finns act with Finns. In America I would never be in a sauna party when everyone is running naked and being drunk having good time. But we would get drunk and have a regular party in different ways. So it’s different but because football is so much of a culture in America and get put through so much punishment and we’re also trying so hard to be part of that fraternity so that struggle really bonds as together. So it really creates more bonds. You know what they say about relationship in general... when you go through something very stressful and come out on the other side, whether victorious or not, but just the fact you come out of it creates a bond. I don’t think there’s much of opportunity to create the same bond in Finland. It’s not that it couldn’t be created... it’s just that it’s more common in America because it’s the lifestyle, it’s the culture.

Mikael: Right. And lastly do you feel like Finnish or American team culture puts more significance in group activities?

Stephen: Group activities like what?

Mikael: Like, for example, just trying to bond the team more or stuff like that...

Stephen: There's a lot of teams that, especially in professional sports, when you see a team that gets along off the field they have chemistry on the field. If you genuinely care about the players you play with you call them friends and you can hang out with them, I think you have a sense of pride about that person and that relationship so you go an extra mile for them. If you don't like the people you play with, it's hard to be successful. That was my biggest struggle as a coach. I had so many pieces from so many different places. The best coaches in the world take those pieces and make them one unit. It's difficult when you have different cultures, different interests, different languages and everyone is not as motivated for the one common goal. To come out as a unit. So you would go have a bowling night, go laser tag or go paintball or something. We would do "wing-nights" and stuff like that. Have a barbeque and invite a team of 40-50 there but only 10-15 would show up. So, not being able to have that off field chemistry does affect a lot of, like the question you asked before, how guys interact with each other off the field. Like how close they are. And it has a lot to do with your performance on the field. And you can see it, you can see when guys get along. You can genuinely see when someone cares for the wellbeing and success of others. And you can see when they don't care. I've been actually called for coach's office for not celebrating for someone who scored a touchdown. And I told them point blank that "I don't like that guy". Because he literally did think that are detrimental to my other teammates I was trying to protect. So you have to deal with that environment of like a soap opera. But you're dealing with so many personalities. So you have to find the good mesh and someone who can coach the mess. And even when I don't like you, I care about – that becomes a family.

Interview with Vincent Pervis

Mikael: Alright, interview with Mr. PerfectPervis. Yeah, so, first to give a little bit of background just share your experiences of playing football both in United States and in Finland.

Vincent: Alright, so my real name is Vincent Pervis. But since 2008 I've been going with "PerfectPervis" and that's my written handle in social media outlets. I started playing football in Texas, I'm from outside of Houston, Texas - a small city named "Texas City" which sounds like something I made up but that's a real city. I started playing football when I was four. It was a crazy story – instead of me watching football on TV and say "Mom, I'm gonna go sign up". I remember like yesterday, one day mom told me to get in the car. Where I'm from when parents something, you do it. Thirty minutes later, they're putting a helmet on me. And that's how I got introduced to American football. No choice at all. There first position I tried to play... the coaches asked who wants to play "quarterback" and I raised my hand. I knew what that was. They put me in my position and I thought "hold up, this isn't quarterback". But apparently they said "cornerback". I ended up playing cornerback and running back and for first season I was a backup. But later in the season they finally gave me the ball. And for some reason I was running 99 yards backwards. And everybody in the stands are yelling at me "You're running the wrong way!" I always tell this story because that's how far you can come from this sport. I played in the local city, Texas City, went high school and played football like everyone does in Texas. I was all-district, not all-state. Texas is a very hard

state to become all-state. The people who became all-state in Texas are like Adrian Peterson, they're going to like NFL. I got a scholarship to play football in Stephen F. Austin (State University), which is not in Austin, it's in small city of Nacogdoches in East Texas. It's a small Division 1 double-A school, so they play against bigger schools. In my college career I played against TSU (which had Andy Dalton), played against SMU who had Emmanuel Sanders on their team at the time. Those are two big names we played against there. Well, we lost both games. With SFA, I won the conference championship there, which was like my goal in life. I didn't know I was going to play football in college until I was junior and people told me I was good. And in college I wasn't very good until I was junior again. And suddenly they let me play in the games and I was really good. And we won the championship in our senior year. And people told me that you might even get in the NFL. And I was like "nah, no kidding". I gave it a try, I went to combine and some pro days. Nothing came out of it. I was small, I was fast but not that fast. I was a 4.4 guy (40 yard dash time), but I weighed about 180 pounds. But there was guys who were 220 pound guys who also ran 4.4 so they took that guy. I couldn't block a soul to save my life. So, after football I just went back to Houston and got a job. Was about to get to the workplace. But one day I was at home and I get a phone call from a high school coach of mine. They said "Pervis, they're looking for you". I was like, "Who, the cops? Do I have a warrant or something?" They were like "No, the coach is looking for you from Switzerland". So I was like "What?" They told me that my friend told them about me and they've seen my film and want me to come out I thought "You're [explicit] me." But I gave them my information. And then sure enough day later I got a call from the coach in Switzerland and he asked me if I can come in two weeks. I thought that "Sure, I can get passport and stuff". And come to find out the friend was to tell them about me. And he had told me six months ago before he was going to play football in Europe. He asked me to come with him and I thought "Yeah sure", although I thought it was all [explicit]. So I quit my job. Two weeks later I'm in Switzerland and it changed my life. I played in Switzerland with Basel Gladiators. We came second place after Calanda Broncos, the superpower in Europe. Got to meet all the Americans from different parts of the world. After the seasons was over I was looking for new opportunities and one of my coaches brought me to Italy. I got to live in Rome, which was the coolest experience of my life. After Italy I got very interested of playing more football. Instead of going back home, ended up talking to some teams in Brazil and ended up paying my own flights there, ended up playing for a completely brand new team. And in Brazil I learned about the cultural differences. In previous two teams I was professional player, paid to play, do my job, help win the games, have fun. In Brazil, they didn't know how to play football. They asked me to create playbooks, come up with schedules for practices. We had coaches meetings, players meetings. Everyone on the team had to get the field ready for the games. The cheerleaders for games were players' and coaches' girlfriends and wives. It was a very humbling experience. After going to Brazil, okay I enjoyed it but I'm getting older and I got one more season. So I signed to play for the Serbian Kragujevac Wild Boars, powerhouse team in Serbia. One of my ex-teammates, Stan Bedwell, played there quarterback and he wanted me to play with him. I agreed but about a week after the flight I got a call from my friend who I started to play overseas with and he told me about the opportunity to go to Finland, me, you and other guy from Texas and have our last season in Europe. In Finland you didn't have to play until May so I could stay home for a little longer. So May comes, go to Finland... I'm not gonna speak too long for that

because it wasn't the best experience but it was an experience. I learned a lot of things about football. After that season I said I was done but I kept dating a Finnish woman. She came to Texas the next summer, we fell in love and got married. Lived in Texas for another year and a half but we decided as a family we're moving to Finland to be closer to her family. I'm okay going back to Finland and living there. I know people there so we'll have good time. But before that I wanted to ease out the financial burden to going to another country where I don't have a job. So I ended up being a coach and player for another team in Brazil. They asked me to play for last two years but I told them I'm retired. They agreed to pay my flight to Finland and going to pay me while I was there so when I get to Finland, I'm set up. So I go down there, like the first time in Brazil... I loved the grassroots. They were in their third year, they didn't know how to play football. We had meetings... I had to play quarterback, teach people how to play receiver and quarterback. Teach them how to watch film. We graded each other. They soaked it all in. It was an awesome experience. We won our division, lost semifinals so that was disappointing. But they have been very successful since I left, they won the championship after. I stayed in contact with the guys, they ask me questions, send me videos and stuff like that asking if they do things right. So it was a really unique experience. But then I came to Finland, man. I came here to live. But I knew that I wanted to something in my spare time. Maybe not "work work" because I don't know the language and my job skills in the United States won't transfer to Finland. So I reached to a couple local lower level teams asking if they need a coach... Because I have been away from my wife for six months in Brazil so I'm not coming to Finland to play football and be away from my wife. I was going to coach a couple times per week and stay home and learn what's going on in Finland. And it was probably one of my best experience of my life. I became the head coach of Kotka Eagles. They were a new team as well. Didn't have a lot of players. There were some people who had a lot of experience but there was also a lot of completely new guys. The people from Kotka were very brand new but the people from Kouvola and Helsinki area knew football. So, it was a good blend. I taught the younger guys and dealt with the older guys the best I could. While doing that I noticed that I had a lot of free time, so I started watching Maple League games and I noticed a lot of similarity for the last times I was there with the players and teams. Biggest thing I noticed that the talent level wasn't up to what it could be. So after that season I thought "I'm bored, maybe I start playing football again". I ended up playing with Helsinki Wolverines for a season. It was actually a bad timing. When I was watching the games, I started writing about the games in Maple League. I started a blog. And I come to find out that I really enjoy writing and I had a unique approach to watching the games and what I thought about it. And people really responded to it. Local media outlets started picking up my articles. The AFI guy (American football international) contacted me and wanted me to write articles every week. So it boosted my profile and I kind of focused on it. I'm one of those guys who likes projects. Since that it has just expanded. I made a five-year-plan and I'm on year-three right now. I have a very decent fanbase in Finland and starting to get more international fanbase. After I had that one season of playing after retiring as a coach. Entire time I'm writing and visiting players and talking about the sport. And last year, I was able to fully not be a player. I wasn't a player, I wasn't a coach, I was a writer and content creator. I actually expanded. I took three trips to Sweden and stayed with some football teams and talked with the guys. My blog turned into a podcast. I started meeting more international people, talking to more people in different countries. That lead me being part of "Po

dium”, a lot of things that I did to them opened my eyes internationally. I really exploded to the European to the scene and got a better understanding what is going on. In the last years, it has been really insightful. I’ve been able to get behind the scenes of Maple League, the Superserien in Sweden and also there’s guys in Austria, Italy and Poland who stay in contact with me all the time. This past winter I stepped up my “import game” and contacted like 60 guys about their experiences of being an import in Europe. With all that, it’s just an expansive amount of knowledge. I left something out, though... The first summer I was here, I started my own company. We’re on kind of a hiatus now because I turned more towards the blog. But when I started that company, I was visiting schools in Finland and across the world teaching about the game and history of American football. With the three years in here, I’ve travelled a lot in Finland and I’ve learned about the culture and the landscape of football in Finland. How do schools react towards the sport, how the kids at different age groups react to it. The younger kids are more responsive but the older kids are “too cool to do it” but they like to talk about it. Even seeing like how the football team in Kuopio practices compared to the teams in Helsinki. The difference of what equipment they use, what personnel they have, how team reacts. You have teams in Seinäjoki and Vaasa where the way they do things is completely different. It’s been a wild ride last three years, really. And now I’m still working for Podium, working on my podcast, still working on the import series and whenever someone wants to do something about football I’m all about it. I’ve been contacted to do lot of things but I tried to stay with what I know. And what I know is the international scene. I’ve been coming more comfortable with Finland. My slogan for last year was “Pervis knows” because people would tell me a lot of information. I like to keep the confidentiality, but I also liked that people trusted me enough to share these things. I try to stay pure, I’m not in it for money... like this interview. And now I’m here, so yeah. I know I can talk for a long time...

Mikael: Great, thank you very much. That was very comprehensive...

Pervis: Yeah, I can talk about it forever.

Mikael: But I guess we can move to the “cultural dimensions”. So now I’m going to ask a set of ten questions which research about the cultural dimensions I’m researching about.

Pervis: Okay.

Mikael: Anyways, the first question is “How do Finnish players treat leadership positions like coach or team captain different to American players?”

Pervis: I think there’s a huge difference in hierarchy. In Finland, American football is a hobby. So it’s all optional. There’s team captains, there’s coaches but the end of the day the players feel that they’re in charge what they want to do or not. Okay, you may tell me something I don’t like. I will say something back to you to let you know that I don’t like it and I don’t care that you’re the captain. And it’s normal society, it’s the cultural norm. You’re entitled to that. American football in United States is not like that. Like I told you earlier, the first time I played sports, my mom took me there. The first practice she told me about the coach that “You do whatever that man tells you. You don’t talk back. He’s in charge. You treat him like he’s me”. And that’s how we’re raised in this sport. When I was in college, my senior year in college, I was 23. My position coach was 24. He didn’t play football in college. He immediately became an assistant coach. And he came in and he was coach. I thought “this guy is my age”. But at the same time, we had no problem with respect. If he told me to do something, I did it. He was like six months older than me but the thing is in the sport is that if someone is a coach or is in a leadership position, you respect them. In Finland that is not

the case and it has a lot to do about how the sport is raised. I spent time coaching with Helsinki Wolverines two years ago. We coached the Men's team, the second Men's team and the juniors. It was actually three American coaches coaching these age groups. And we considered a huge amount of disrespect came from the youth kids. And the thing was about it that... I know that everyone has their own style and technique and things like that. If we told them to run, they would say they can't do it no longer, but you say keep running just to motivate them to keep going. These kids were verbally abusing us if we verbally abused them. And their parents were there to allow it. They told us that "you can't talk to my kid like that" or "he's just lashing out". And that just rubbed me the wrong way, personally. That's why I didn't return to coach the juniors. It was the U17 age group where I went to a few practices and after the way the kids reacted I stopped coaching them. I only coached the U15 age group because the kids were a little bit more respectful. In United States, you're taught at very young age that when you play this sport you respect the people in charge. One, they're usually volunteers. A lot of time people were taught by dads of someone in the team. When I was in United States, I taught a youth team in my free time. They didn't pay me, there was no benefits, so the kids knew I was spending my time there. Now here, a lot of time coaches receive some kind of "stipend" but a lot of the time they're coaching for free as well. But it's the same amount of "you're the coach but it doesn't matter". But in Finnish culture, I think it's strictly "American football thing". My wife coaches youth basketball. She has been coaching U10 girls all the way to U18 girls. And I've never seen that type of utter disrespect to authority. Last summer, I spend time doing strength and conditioning to one of the youth girls basketball team. I don't speak any Finnish, so I expected there to be some miscommunication. The coach told them "listen to him" and the girls were in complete silence listening to me. I'd say something, they would do it. No issues. I go to football practice and 15-year old boys would have a lot of questions, lot of lip and he might not even do it. I know a lot people would think "you don't understand the culture". It's American football culture. The American Football culture in Finland is different. It's more exclusive than inclusive. I think I over answered that...

Mikael: No, no. That was perfect. Pun not intended. Okay, the next one is "How do Finnish and American teams treat practices differently to each other? For example, is the focus in practices more about constant competition against each other or personal skills improvement?"

Vincent: Definitely the former, not the latter. In Finland, a lot of practices can be scheduled very similarly. You stretch, you do individual drills, you do 1v1, you do 7v7 and then you compete either inside run or team. Depending of the team, you could be doing team drills for an hour or hour and half. And what it does is that the players who aren't that good don't get to develop. And the players who are good compete against lower level players. It slows down development. There aren't a lot of camps... A lot of teams do what they call "camps", air quotation please, and what they mean by camp is that "we're gonna have two practices per day". And it's the same practices. It's still the same, very basic pattern again. What American football should do is develop skills through practice. Practice makes perfect. You have more time in practice than in the game. If you constantly practice like it's a game, you're not going to learn how to get better. There's a lot of skill sets you can only learn in practice, in a controlled environment. A lot of players aren't getting that opportunity because they are competing. A lot of these teams here is what you would call amateur teams. Which means you might have on the same field someone like me, a player with 25-year experience of American football. And then you might have someone who has played for two years

and his original sport was ice hockey. There's things about this sport that there's no way he's going to know that I already know. The key of practice is to close the gap of us as players. Well we only have two practices and we have game in a few months so in practice we're only doing drills that are making entire team better, from my point of view as the experienced player and not the younger guy... What you get is that he's either going to catch up fast if he's really good and his natural ability can do it, or he falls off. In United States it's an easy thing. You either catch up or don't. There's a million players. Finland doesn't have that luxury. That luxury of "we're going in practice try to improve to win games" doesn't help the sport down the road. You have players who can be really good in a few years if they're developed. But they're not getting developed because some teams have 17-year old kids playing in the Men's level. What happens is that that kid gets air quotes "experience" by playing on the Men's level but it's not quality. Getting beat for a hundred times does not get you better. I'd rather go a hundred times not getting beat in a lower level, developing my skills set than getting beat in a high level hundred times and never improve. So I think that what comes to practice, the objective for most teams is to compete in practice against each other which means you can only get as good as your competition. Instead of improving the development of skills. If I had players who are really good at something, and that is really good for the competition. Like if you have a receiver who is faster than everyone in the defense. In practice, even when they compete, he's going to boost his ego. But what if his routes aren't that good? But it doesn't matter because he's just faster than everybody. So, he doesn't actually get to develop but he think he's good. Until he goes up against someone he needs to run better routes but he can't because he hasn't practiced running better routes. He has just considered being better than the competition. So that's what it is... Some teams have been making improvements. I don't want to label the whole country as that. But the majority of the teams are concentrating about the competition against each other rather than competition against themselves. Excluding the Helsinki Roosters, obviously.

Mikael: Alright. Then the third one is that: "In which ways is it different how Finnish and American teams set goals for their team, both in short-term and long-term?"

Vincent: I think the difference is confidence. For what I've noticed, setting goals for a lot of Finnish teams is not something they want to do. They don't want to go for a season and say "we want to do this, this and this". They might set the basic goals. "We want to win every game we can win", obviously. Or "we want to win championship this year" or make it to playoffs. But they keep it very general, to what everyone would expect. Not one team you play against is going to say "well, we don't expect win this game..." Everyone wants to win. If you ask a team if they're going to playoffs, they're going to say yes. That's what most Finnish teams are focusing on. In the United States, you would walking in a room and a coach would ask you "what are your 10 goals for this season?" And I'm like "what do you mean 10 goals?" You need to have a goal for how many yards per carry you're going to have, you need to have a goal how high do you want your offense to be ranked... Now, it might seem shallow way to set goals but it has been proven that more detailed your goals are, the more likely you are to succeed. If you don't have set goals you can hold yourself accountable to, you're more likely to settle for mediocrity. And in Finland, that's the fallback side. [off the record for a few sentences] I hate celebrating a win. It only lasts as soon it is over. The next game is week away. You have to get ready for it. Here, it's not really the case. When teams win you can really see them celebrating the wins. When you see the American imports here, after tough-fought

wins the Finnish would ask them to celebrate and you see would see the more-seasoned Americans tell them they need to rest and recover. Even though they're happy they've won, they know they have another game. Kind of goes back to the competition thing. Yeah, competition is great. I beat this opponent. But now I have another opponent. Only when I win the championship, it's over. Here in Finland the thought of is that if my goal is to win the game, I won the game. But that was the only goal. My goal wasn't that "win the game by 20 points and have three sacks". Again, when I talk about stats it sounds selfish. But you need to be selfish to be good. There's not a problem saying that you have 1000 yards at the end of the season. There was a recent import who played in Finland two years ago, Joshua Quezada, do you know him?

Mikael: I do not.

Vincent: He played for Turku two years ago. He lead the league in rushing. His goal every year is to have 1000 yards rushing. He had 1000 yards of rushing in Poland and lead the league, came to Finland and had 1000 yards of rushing and lead the league. Last season he was in Kragujevac Wild Boars and had 1000 yards of rushing and lead the league. And guess what his goal is for this year? Obviously, rush for 1000 yards and lead the league in rushing. Now, if he doesn't do that it doesn't make him a failure, but he has the motivation do it because he has done it everywhere he has been and he has the track record. Now has his team always been successful? Maybe not. But he has always kept himself at such high standard. You would never blame him because he played in the level of his goals. Whenever you have a running back who rushed for 1000 yards, you have a good running back. You can't say he could have done more. When you have someone, who is keeping himself to that standard. Meanwhile you have other people saying that their goal is to win the game. What are you going to do about it? "I'm gonna play my best." Very vague. Here in Finland there aren't goals set specifically like that. No one is saying that "these are our 10 goals". You've never going to find that and it's not in the culture to do it. And the difference is that having those specific goals is what raises the level of competition and development. I think it should be implemented but that doesn't fit to the culture norms.

Mikael: Yeah. Well, actually my fourth one was going to be about the individual level, but you answered it so explicitly, so I don't think we need to go there...

Vincent: No, it's fine.

Mikael: Unless you have something else to add...

Vincent: I don't know.

Mikael: Well you covered it so well, anyways let's move on to the next one.

Vincent: Alright.

Mikael: Alright, the next one question is "In which ways is it different how Finnish and American teams and players treat failure to reach their goals differently?"

Vincent: I think it goes back to the whole... hobby of the sport here. Here in Finland it's a hobby and you obviously want to win but when you don't win you ease over a little bit better. I know for my experience of playing and coaching with guys. I've been with teams and we lost, it's over, we lost. After I don't want to talk, I don't want to joke... I want to sit in my failure. I'm not seeing a lot of Finnish guys do that. It's more of "We lost, I was upset after the loss, it's been 30 minutes after the game, I'm now minding my business". But that's not specific about Finland, I've seen that about other Europeans as well. "We lost but I'm still going to have good time, the game is over, nothing I can do about it". It's one way to take it. Americans usually take it a little bit harder. You don't see a

lot of Americans both in Europe and in United States after a loss feel the need to let themselves to be okay with it. I actually think that's something that Finland has right. It is just a sport and there's nothing you can do after a loss. But Americans seem take it more personal. And I don't necessarily think it's a good thing to take it that personal, but it is a cultural difference that you can lose a game and go on about it and laugh and joke after the game. The Helsinki Wolverines lost two Spaghetti Bowls and still to this day if I go to Robert Johnson talking about the losses, his face turns to a different color. Because it [explicit] him off. If I go about it to a Finnish descent, he would just respond that "Ah well [explicit] you too, it's over, nothing I can do about" (with a joking voice) But a lot of Americans take it very seriously, that's because the history of the sport is that it's been compared to battle. It's not anything like battle but... I've been asking a lot of Americans what football mean to them, they say it means everything. It means my life. It's all I do. When I ask Europeans about it, they say that it gave them opportunity. It's something they like to do. It has help me to go from here to there. That difference of approach isn't just Finnish thing but it's more of European and American thing. But Finnish and American in this context have different views about failure. Finns can get over stuff while Americans kind of hold that grudge. I think that's it.

Mikael: Well, the next one is that "How much do you think Finnish and American and team culture consider success or failure to be because of their own doing, and how much do they consider it being outside of their control?"

Vincent: That's tough because that's very individual depending of the players. Different players have different aspect to it. I feel like I've met some Finnish guys who have taken losses personally "I should have done this and should have done that". But I've also met overwhelming amount who just said, "We lost, what can I do, it's a team sport". I guess what comes to success... You said success and failure, right?

Mikael: Yes.

Vincent: I'm going to talk about success then because I just talked about failure. What comes to successes I feel like Americans... when team is successful they point out what they individually did. When the team isn't successful, American start to point out what people were unsuccessful. Not what the team did wrong. It's kind of "We win as a team, we lose as individuals". I think that's what Americans bring. I try to not speak personally... But I've been known to do the same personally. Like, we lost a game, but I did everything I could do to win the game. So, I don't feel bad that we lost but I'm upset and I'm thinking "That [explicit] took a play off, that [explicit] took a play off..." Excuse my language. But those types of things are different. I think with the Finnish guys it's more of "If we lost, we lost because we didn't play good enough as a team". And if we won, it's because some guy stepped up more. So, it's kind of an opposite feel for Finnish guys. They celebrate wins as a team and can say "we had certain guys who made some really good plays". But when they lose, they don't point the finger. It's more of "we all lost". Americans tend to be opposite. If we won, that's great. I did this, you did this, everybody's good. But if we lost it's not that we lost as a team. Everyone should have individually done this and that. I think that Finns have it on point to keep it as a team loss, but I think Americans tend to go the other way. Especially American players in foreign countries. If you speak about American players in Finland... I've seen Americans score four touch-downs and they lost. I doubt that American said "We lost". I'm sure he was saying "[explicit] should have helped me". And it makes sense sometimes but at the same time it's not the thought process you want players to have. And Finnish players don't have that thought process. I can't ever think of

a Finnish guy scoring four touchdowns and saying that other guys should have stepped up. Their train of thought is “I scored four touchdowns, we lost, maybe I could have scored five”. Or maybe the other team was just better. It keeps them a little bit more sane in that aspect.

Mikael: Alright. Well. The next one is “In which ways do you feel Finnish players communicate differently with their teammates, compared to communication by American players?”

Vincent: This is funny. Because this is one of the biggest issue Americans and Finns have when they play football together. There was a video that went viral online that was about this. It was that “Listen to the message, not the tone”. You can call me [explicit] for not knowing something and correcting and I take it as “Oh he’s just correcting, that’s what he wants to do”. As a Finnish guy... If you call me a [explicit] I’m taking it personally. Like you just went to my feelings. And when Finns are communicating with each other, they’re talking but just talking. There’s not going to be explicit that invoke emotion. Americans are going to use those explicit. Like when I’m talking here, I’m swearing a lot not because that I don’t respect what I’m saying but it’s that I’m talking passionately. Imagine me on a football field. I’ve been in situations that someone messes up and I yell [explicit]. I’m upset at the situation, not the person. But if the person is not on the same wavelength he might he think he blames me or he thinks that I suck and that could break down the communication. Other thing about communication is knowing terms. With the language issue Finns and English have... American football is meant to be taught in English. Guys who learn the sport in Finnish learn the game differently than in English. If I tell someone “we’re going to banjo this”, he has no idea what that means. There’s no Finnish word for banjo and it’s a common football term but he doesn’t know that. So, when I say “let’s banjo this” and he has no idea what I’m talking about and they just scored on us. I think this is another communication issue... I don’t know if I’m talking about two kinds of communication now.

Mikael: No, it’s fine.

Vincent: But football communication is a big difference. You have guys who have been taught in a certain way. Americans in the United States are taught the same way. If you meet someone who plays football and is 16-year-old, you know what he knows about football. If I go to Finland, that 16-year-old, it depends where he learned football. You have some kids who learned from Finnish and American guys, they have a great understanding. And you got guys like, teams that just started, like Lappeenranta – there’s not an American guy in sight out there. So, whatever those kids are going to learn, by the time they’re 18-19 and come to Maple League and put on the field with American and they’re going to talk two different languages. And not just actual languages but football languages. So here, one thing that I think a lot of teams need to reinforce more is learning the sport in English. I spent time in Sweden last year. I went to two different teams and watch them practice and they speak English. They had even less English-speaking players than Finnish teams have but they only speak English. In Finland, you can see teams speaking English when they speak to everyone, but Finnish players speak Finnish between each other. Which is great if the translation would work but it doesn’t. So, the issue is that if American tells a Finnish guy an English term from football, the Finnish guy might know what it is but doesn’t understand what the American is saying. And he asks someone else and needs translating. It’s great in a learning environment but becomes an issue in the game. You see a lot of these teams with a lot of imports, they can change things on the fly. Football is a chemistry sport, so communication is key. Americans tend to stick to the sport’s teams that they have been taught and Finns stick to what they’ve been taught. So bringing

them together would be the biggest difference. Me personally, the level of Finnish I know... When I in Kotka, I told the guys "I'm not on the field, so if I say something and you need to say it in Finnish, as long as we can translate it that's fine". Like, the names of the plays and the terms we can't change to them to a Finnish name. But there's no problem calling "vasen or oikea" for left and right, we can work that out. Eventually we can use synonyms for colors because I know what you're saying. But when I'm saying "banjo", it needs to be said banjo. You have to say it in English and know what it means. What comes to communication, here in Finland, even if you make it as local as you can but you need to keep the terms in English. Because it's English sport and it just doesn't translate.

Mikael: Exactly, yeah.

Vincent: I know I'm long-winded...

Mikael: No, that's perfect.

Vincent: You're going to have a lot of material.

Mikael: I do, indeed. I'm transcribing all this so it's going to be fun. But I like to do it. Anyways, the next one is: Is Finnish or American culture inclined to try out new ideas and concepts and if so, in which ways?

Vincent: I think they're both open to new concepts. I think there's different ways to talk about it. If we talk about x's and o's... teams in the States are looking to see who's the new hot coach and love to do trick plays. In Finland, maybe not so much. In Finland everyone wants to play 4-3 or 3-4 (basic defenses) or run 4-2-5, which is actually nickel, but they were taught it's 4-2-5. So, you see a lot of common things. You had a team last year, Kuopio Steelers in the Maple League, they tried to use 3-4 defense, but they were not using 3-4 concepts. They thought they were running 3-4 but they actually ran 4-3. They fired the defensive coordinator and brought another guy and they still ran the same defense and it didn't work. But they just changed where everyone was lined up and thought it was a different defense. I think that both Finnish and American are open, but Finnish would more likely say "4-3 always works, we'll stick with 4-3". Because it always works they're not inclined to try something new. You don't see a lot of coaching clinics in Finland. You don't see a lot of coaches doing different thing. I had a coach when I was with Kouvola Indians, we're doing all these plays and he's constantly trying to change the plays and he kept saying "When I was with (Porvoo) Butchers..." and we said "you're no longer with the Butchers". This is different team and personnel. Lots of teams in Finland don't play to their personnel. You see playbooks that a team comes up with and says that this is our playbook and the players need to fit the team. In United States, that's not how it goes. There's a lot of free coaching clinics, people are constantly evolving. You have teams that one year are a run-team and another year are a pass-team. You have NFL teams bringing college coaches to help them doing schemes. Innovation is what how you stay relevant in the United States. In Finland, that is not the case. There was a huge shift years ago where Finnish league was a hard-running league. One of the best in Europe. There was a shift and went to spread-offense. Now you have youth teams all over Finland doing shotgun offense. A kid doesn't know how to take a ball under center because he's in shotgun. It's similar to what's happening in United States but the kids in United States are getting more fundamentals coaching. This Finnish kid is just taught to catch a ball. He doesn't know how to do drop backs, doesn't have any proper form but he's in shotgun so it looks like everything else, so they stick with it. I was coaching a team in Lahti where the coaches said they want to win double-wing formation. I said "that's weird, man"

and he said “yeah but we have inexperienced players but when we keep it simple, it works for us”. I thought “okay, makes sense”. We have new inexperienced players but when we will put them in this offense, it actually does work. He was right. Their skillset was going to make it work. The team actually are getting new players and these players have played before and they don’t want to play in this offense. Because they need certain positions, so they can pass the way they want to. The problem is that the full team won’t develop that way. The offense is built for a certain skillset. And not everybody has that skillset. And in Finland I think that’s the biggest thing. People don’t think “this is our team, and this is what we need to do as a team” rather than “this is our scheme, how do we fit players to our scheme?” And that’s troubling because what you have is up and down years. You have teams that are good or bad depending if the players fit or not. Instead of a team that adapts. You have the team in Oulu, the Oulu Northern Lights. They run option offense and if you don’t play option, you’re not playing in that offense. Because that’s what they run and fit players to it. But the players from there can’t go elsewhere and be successful because they learned that one skillset. Here in Finland, the teams stay within themselves. You got Tampere Saints last year who brought a pocket-quarterback, who could throw spread concepts, but they were running air raid concepts. And they didn’t notice the difference. In United States people are trying to change those x’s and o’s to invent and be creative but in Finland people tend to stick to what they know and make it work. Outside of that I was going to talk about the philosophy of the teams... What was the question again?

Mikael: Yeah, the question was if Finnish and American team culture is more inclined to try out new ideas and concepts...

Vincent: Ah. The philosophy is different that you have teams that “this is how we want to build our team and this is what we’re going to do”. You have some teams in Finland who say that they’re not going to have any imports. Who cares if we get beat by everybody, we won’t bring imports. And some teams are like “we’re spending all our money on imports and not have any juniors”. They decide that “this is what we want to do” and not work with the situation. Some years you can have more imports, some years less. You have teams like Helsinki Roosters, Vaasa Royals, Kuopio Steelers – all these teams fluctuated in having imports or not having imports. They’ve fluctuated in how their junior teams have been doing because they had certain things done in their organization. Their budgets have been changing up and down depending what they’ve been able to do. These teams are adapting and open to change. Even though it looks like the Roosters are just beating everybody, their youth program has gone through a lot of changes. They’ve been investing in coaches over last years and have the kids going to different camps and stuff. You had Vaasa Royals who two years ago had all the high-priority imports, went to championships and lost. This year they had lower quality imports, less known names but still competed. They adapted. They didn’t have the budget for all the high names, but they still competed with what they had. You have some teams like Hämeenlinna Huskies and Turku Trojans who were like “keep doing this, keep doing this and we’re done. We can’t compete anymore.” Obviously, there’s more there to it than imports but it’s starts with the organization and not being adaptable and sticking to something that isn’t working. It’s a stubborn way and the Finnish way is stubborn. A lot of Finnish people are stubborn even when they have been proven wrong. In Finland, there’s a lot of teams doing that but the teams that I named, they’re adaptable. If you go to Kuopio or Vaasa, the teams are in the community because they’ve been consistent over time and adapted. Same thing happens in the United States. Some

team is a hard-running team, they have some injuries, they adapt, and they become a passing teams. Here in Finland, it doesn't happen as often as you would like. In United States, teams are constantly adapting. Alabama Crimson Tide change their entire offense from being a running team to an open-team, the second-best team in the United States. In Finland, everyone isn't up to that yet.

Mikael: Alright.

Vincent: I know it's tough.

Mikael: Alright, the ninth one is that "Are teammates closer in American or Finnish sports team when being outside of the football field?"

Vincent: That's really unfair question because of the circumstances. You have guys playing, basically, as amateurs. So I'll try to give a more equal comparison. There are semi-pro teams in United States, I used to play for one for fun. What I did notice is that, I think it's similar. It really depends who you know from the team. I played on a team where I knew all the guys but wasn't friends with them. The guys I was friends with, you know, "oh we got a game this weekend and meet before..." and afterwards go things. Finland is pretty much the same. If they have a lot of free time, they're going to hang out with their teammates. But the comradery of the sport doesn't transfer the same. In American sports, if you play with someone long enough eventually you will become friends. You will know more about them than you want to know, because you spend so much time with them. Some of my best relationships were made in practices, shooting [explicit] near watercooler. In Finland, not the case. I've always had great time in Finnish practices, I think Finnish people are hilarious when they are relaxed. During the stretch and at the end of practice, funniest time ever. But when the practice is over, that's it. You won't hear from these guys. If they're not already friends with you. I've had some guys who has asked to hang out after practices but in general the sport itself doesn't bring people together. Teams do events sometimes, but it feels forced in Finnish culture. And what's crazy is that you don't practice even that much in Finland that you need to get away... Teams sometimes practice only twice a week. But they don't want to spend an extra day to hang out. In my opinion, having an extra day watching film or just hanging out would be really beneficial. But a lot of teams don't do that. But some younger teams do. Like some college town like Seinäjoki where a lot of players live close together and under 23-years-old so they don't have wife and kids. So they're more likely to hang out. Guys playing for teams like Helsinki, it's a metropolitan city, everyone lives in different places. People have job and kids, go to practices when they can. Afterwards they have to go home to live their lives where they have to travel to get somewhere so they can't hang with everybody. So with that, it really comes down to what kind of players you have. In Finland, the sport itself is great but the hobby mentality means is that it's not going to build relationships. A lot of players in Finland playing American football didn't start when they were kids. Again, I'm going to compare to my wife coaching basketball here because the sport's culture is different what is different about American football. It's not the same as sports' culture in Finland. I've seen girls who were 18-year-old playing since they were 8. When you play with someone for 10 years, you're going to have rapport. But here in Finland a lot of the guys didn't start playing until they were 19 or 20, they already had all their friends. They already knew everyone they were going to hang out with. I met a guy last summer who quit playing because all his friends were getting married and he wanted to be able to go to the weddings in summer. For me, it wouldn't be possible. All my friends would be in the team. But a lot of his friends weren't because he had all those

friends before he started playing football. So here in Finland, the culture of American football is such a hobby that it's separate from life. So, building that outside of football culture is harder because you're forcing it. In United States, it's part of the culture. You grow up playing football with these guys, by the time you're 19 or 20 you're friends.

Mikael concludes the interview because his 10th question was already answered in the last question

Interview with Robert Johnson

Mikael: Okay, interview Mr. Robert Johnson. First, just to give background, just with your own words please explain how long you've been playing in United States and in Finland and your general experiences in both countries.

Robert: I started playing football at age of five years old. Back home in America's Georgia, with my uncles, my uncles used to give me the brown things of the toilet papers, so they used to give it to me and I tried to run and shake them and they tried to tackle me. Ever since I've been playing ball. My first time playing team football was when I was six-years-old. I played in a seven to eight years old league so I always played with guys older than I was. Then I went to middle school, played on a eighth-grade team as a sixth grader. When I in high school, I was a starter as a freshman. Then I went to junior college and then to Texas Tech (college). I came to Finland when I was 25 years old and I've been here 11 years since then. Is that okay?

Mikael: Yeah yeah. Then to the cultural differences part of the interview. So I have a set of ten questions and answer to them the best as you think you can. So the first question is that "How do Finnish players treat leadership positions like coach or team captain different to American players?"

Robert: Well, with Finnish guys, they're more reserved guys. Some of the guys haven't been watching or playing since they've been kids, so you have to approach the Finnish guys a bit differently. With American guys you can be all over the face and they're not going to think anything about it. Because with American guys, it's not about the tone of the voice but about the message. With Finnish guys, if I get with big tone, they're going to take it in a different way. But they need to learn it's about the message, not the tone.

Mikael: Okay. The second one is that "How do you think that Finnish and American treat practices differently to each other? For example is the focus more on constant competition against each other or is it more about personal skills improvement?"

Robert: With Finnish practices, it's more about techniques and individual skills. In America, you practice five times per week and watch film five times per week. So you're already know what you're doing and start playing at an early age. Here in Finland, some guys are not good in hockey or soccer and come to play American football, and it's new to them so you need to teach them a lot of things. And also, you only get to practice two or three times a week as a Finnish so you need to cram a lot of things to those two or three days in order to get production, which is focusing on individuals and techniques and also have to put in plays. The competition is going to come in last, maybe last 15 minutes of the practice.

Mikael: Okay. The third question is that “In which ways is it different how Finnish and American teams set goals for their team, both in short-term and long-term?”

Robert: Well, I don't think Finnish guys really have goals. They've working all the time so they don't really have time to think about goals. They have to think about their families and work. And then they have to think about the plays and focus on themselves. I think from my experience what I'm talking to guys, towards to middle or end of the season guys are starting to understand our goals are in common. In US you're like “We want to win conference championship, we want to beat our rival, win the national championship...” I think the guys in America have the competitive nature.

Mikael: Okay. The next one is that how about in individual level? How is it different how Finnish and Americans set goals for themselves?

Robert: That's a good question. I can say for myself, when I used to set goals I used to work on things I thought I need to improve and when I was improving on them I started working on team things. Sometimes it's not about individual things but team things. So you work on yourself during the off-season and when it gets closer to season you start working on team things. I don't know about Finnish guys how the set goals individually... But you have some guys that work hard in some things. Some guys don't really know how to run. We used to run back home in US. Some guys just always running, playing football in their backyard with friends. Here the guys don't get the chance to do that so they need to constantly work in the individual things. With the Americans, we have to work but it's already imbedded on us because of the things we did on younger age.

Mikael: Okay, well. The next one is “In which ways do you think Finnish and American teams and players treat failure to reach their goals differently?”

Robert: That's a good question. I really don't know how Finnish take losing. I know some guys are upset. But some guys just think that “ah, next year”. Which I understand because it's a hobby for them. If it's a hobby, you're not going to get your hopes that high. Us Americans, this is what we do. We play the game, we love the game. You get upset if you lose, you get upset if you miss a pass. But once you get upset, you need to let it go and get back to the next play.

Mikael: Okay, the next one is kind of a follow up but... How much of it in terms of both cultures people consider their failure or success to be “because of their own doing” and how much is it considered being “outside of their control”?

Robert: I think it's a lot outside of their control. Because, like I said, you can only practice up to three times per week and don't have enough field time. In winter time you have to share the field time with soccer teams and you just don't have the facility. And you don't have the time, guys have to work and they care of their families. Because family has to come first, so I think that's the biggest reason.

Mikael: Alright. Well, the next one is that in which ways do you feel Finnish players communicate differently with the teammates, compared to communication by American players?

Robert: Well, I can say that the younger Finnish guys like to communicate more than the older guys. The older guys just want to do their jobs. It's not a bad trait to have because some people just don't like other people speak. So it's a good trait that Finnish don't do all that talking. Us American guys we're gonna do the talking, we try to get the guys going, it's just in our nature.

Mikael: Yeah. Okay, the next one is that is Finnish or American team culture more inclined to try out new ideas and concepts and if so in which ways?

Robert: It depends on your team. If you have an older team, you kind want to stick to it. If you have younger guys, you can try different things. I think that's everywhere. Like an old coach, he will do what he has been doing for a long time. You get a younger guys and he's going to try new and different things.

Mikael: Alright. Are teammates closer in Finnish or American sports team when being outside of the football field?

Robert: Definitely not. They're not close at all. Again, these are grown men who work every day and have a family so they don't have time to go out like that. But with Americans, you're playing college football and in the pros, of course you're going to hang out together. And team often have activities in America, so people can hang out together anyways.

Mikael: Well, then, this is kind my last but you already kind of talked about but you feel like Finnish don't like to put too much effort for having group activities with the team?

Robert: No, I don't think so. I think that three days around someone is enough. Like I said, family comes first, I totally understand.