

Understanding Small Sports Under Globalization | A Study on Women's American Football:
The Global Dynamics of Women's American Football Involving Finland and the USA

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ABSTRACT

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With more attention given to women's sports, this study focuses on the research gap in women's American football as a heavily under-researched field. The paper aims to examine the global dynamics of women's American football by highlighting the position of the sport in opportunities, challenges, and development process. The study investigates the environment of women's American football by asking the following questions: How is women's American football functioning in the USA and in Finland? What is the nature of international competition in the IFAF Women's World Championship? And what are the challenges and opportunities presented in women's football globally, in Finland, and in the USA?

Through the lens of sports globalization, the study examines the global landscape of American football, while considering cultural aspects, economic aspects, and globalization of sport practices. The study lays groundwork of the local landscape in the US and Finland for comparison and reflection, then it utilizes descriptive analysis in a results-oriented process of the Women's World Championship competitions. For that, online data from relevant American football sources has been utilized. In addition, the study collects data through both online and in-person semi-structured interviews with four contributors who attended the 2022 Women's World Championship in Finland. The data from interviews is thematically analyzed according to the literature concepts of globalization in sports and sport management.

The findings of the study show the impact of globalization on American football, with the sport striving for Olympic inclusion, and gaining further integration in Europe through factors such as international games, online platforms, social media, and international competition. Additionally, it is found that the management of women's American football requires attention and efforts to elements like sustainability, promotion, funding, growth and development, and encouragement of a culture of collaboration and effective leadership. Finally, the main conclusions include encouraged practices, common objectives, challenges, and possibilities of women's American football across global actors. In addition, recommendations are provided based on the insights from the hands-on perspectives of Finnish and American interviewees who are actively engaged in various roles in the women's football environment. Considering the Olympic aspirations of American football this study aims to encourage further research related to the sport.

Keywords: Globalization, Sport Management, Women's American Football, IFAF, Women's World Championships

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Global sports tournaments have a range of benefits that go far beyond the games themselves. They can transform the image of a country or a region. They bring people together and reveal new possibilities to a nation's youth.”

(Attias, 2014)

Global sports tournaments can inspire and motivate younger generations, highlighting new opportunities and possibilities for them to explore. By showcasing the best athletes from around the world, these tournaments can create a sense of global community and foster a greater understanding and appreciation for different cultures. Accordingly, women's American football has been expanding globally in the cultural and competitive dimensions as more opportunities arise in a time where more recognition is given to female athletes as they break barriers (Crawford, 2017). Moreover, women's sport is gaining more recognition even in media buys, which will allow women's sports to grow on a larger scale (Balasaygun, 2023).

In recent years, the growth of small sports has been driven by changes in social values, including an emphasis on individual health and well-being, and the need for community engagement and social connections (Eime et al., 2013). Malm et al. (2019) support this argument, stating that the increase in popularity of small sports is due to people prioritizing their health and fitness. Additionally, (Eime et al., 2013) assert that participation in small sports has become an effective method of building social networks. The study by Hoye et al. (2012) also confirms that the sense of community within small sports organizations fosters social connections and encourages continued participation. Moreover, small sports organizations have adapted their structures and practices to demonstrate their relevance in the modern world, as noted by Gomez et al. (2008), who suggest that modernizing organizational structures and practices is vital to remain competitive in the ever-changing sports landscape.

Researching women's sports is vital to uncover and understand their dynamics, then these sports are able to grow and develop to be more present and effective in their respective communities. In the scope of this research the sport of women's American football is widely under-researched.

Hence, this study aims to communicate more knowledge about the environment of women's American football. Accordingly, the study explores the dynamics of the sport in relation to the USA and the Finnish women's American football environments by looking at their local and international football efforts as active components of the global body of women's American football. In conjunction, the study investigates the global environment of women's American football by investigating and analyzing the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) Women's World Championship (WWC) event. Finally, interviewing active contributors to women's American football provides more context to the explored areas of the sport.

1.1 Structure of the Study

This study addresses women's American football in a unique way by investigating the sport through globalization and sport management as literary concepts to help understand the environment of the sport from the conceptual perspective. Then the study proceeds to explain the research methodology utilized to conduct this research. The chosen methodology is multi-layered as it involves data from important online football sources, analytical description of the international competition of the IFAF Women's World Championship, and interviews with active contributors in the women's football environment. After that, the study lays down a background on women's American football that involves history, leagues and associations, and national teams in the main subjects of interest. Then, a descriptive analytical approach is set to provide insight about women's American football international competition. This approach considers different measures, and teams in the Women's World Championship competitions to tell the story of international women's American football through data analytics. After that, the study presents the findings from the conducted interviews. Those findings reflect the perceptions and ideas of four interviewees who are active contributors in women's football, two of which are American and two are Finnish. Therefore, the study provides perspectives from two different American football environments who are both considered active and successful in their local and the international environments of women's American football. Finally, the research discusses and connects the previous components of the study including the limitations faced conducting this research, and recommendations for future research in this novel area of study. All in all, the research delivers as follows; explore and

shed light, analyze available data to gain insight, and interview contributors in the field of women's football for context.

Understanding different components involved in women's American football can help promote and grow this sport in different locations around the world. The potential for growth, as highlighted in the coming chapters of the study, is substantial enough for allocation of resources towards the development of American football on an international scale. However, there are several challenges that need to be overcome on the local and international levels of football operations. Hence, examining the local American football environments in both Finland and the USA reveals several challenges faced by the sport, including those specific to women's football. Altogether, the challenges in women's American football are possible to overcome, especially considering the possibilities of the sport. Much has been achieved already as women's American football is not new, and the world we live in brings a tremendous amount of connectivity. Perhaps, a concentrated amount of effort and unity can tackle those challenges and capitalize on opportunities to scale. Also, supporting women's American football is necessary for the institutional goals of the International Federation of American football (IFAF) to be achieved. Finally, the values brought by the sport on the social and athletic dimensions are widely encouraged. For example, social cohesion, teamwork, discipline, and punctuality are recognized and encouraged by the American Football Association of Finland (SAJL) (Jenkkifutis, 2023d).

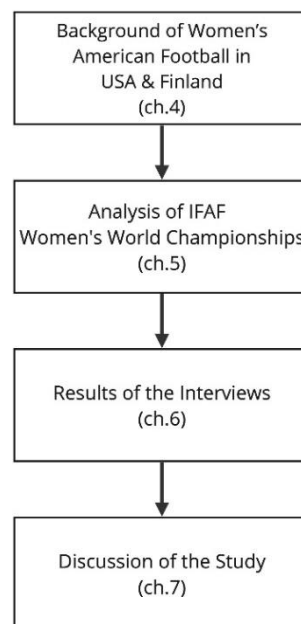


FIGURE 1. Outline of the study.

1.2 Personal Interest

I am a football fan, player, coach, team manager, and overall enthusiast. My football journey has been going for a decade now starting in 2013 during my first year of my bachelor's degree, in Egypt, my home country. Perhaps that is another good reason to utilize globalization is sports in studying American football having firsthand experience in the matter. My first international American football experience was when I first traveled abroad to Berlin to join a football camp and to compete with European players. After that, when I moved to Finland for my master's studies, I stayed engaged in the American football environment in different roles. For example, I played in the men's Maple League, assisted in game operations for the women's Maple League, and interned with the American Football Association of Finland during the IFAF Women's World Championship 2022. My football journey has been transitioning between roles and locations, all of which have developed my knowledge and skills in American football in particular, and in sports management in general. Moreover, researching the sport through an academic lens allows me to deepen my understanding and appreciation for the game.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the key concepts of this study will be introduced and discussed using literary review of previous research in globalization in sports. In addition, sport management literature will be discussed as this research studies several management aspects in women's American football. Overall, the study is utilizing the phenomenon of globalization in sports as a lens to look at the status of American football globally in the scope of sports management.

2.1 Globalization in Sports

Globalization in sports refers to the process of integrating different regions of the world through sports (Gems & Pfister, 2014). It involves the spread of sports activities, teams, and athletes beyond their local or national boundaries to other regions of the world (Pardini, 2008). Pardini (2008) also agreed that globalization has led to the growth of sports events, increased commercialization, and the development of a global sports industry. It has also led to increased cultural exchange and the sharing of sporting knowledge and skills across borders (Johnson et al., 2019).

2.1.1 Effects of Globalization on Sports

Globalization can be highlighted in numerous ways depending on the context of discussion. For example, according to Giulianotti (2013), homogenization and heterogenization theories are commonly used to explain the sociocultural perspective of globalization. Simply explained, homogenization theories are explained through similarities between cultures, whereas heterogenization theories are explained through cultural differences (Giulianotti, 2013). Alternatively, glocalization theory can be looked at to capture the best of both homogenization and heterogenization theories to explain the phenomenon of global sports. Glocalization is described as "the duality of glocality; in other words, the interplay between convergence/ homogenization and divergence/heterogenization tendencies with respect to global sport and global culture in general." (Giulianotti, 2013, p. 22). In addition, according to Shepherd, et al. (2019), sport has been included in a greater globalization process throughout history. This globalization process can be

described as the development of a global network of interdependencies. Shepherd, et al. (2019) also states that in the past century the world has endorsed a lot of technological advances that allowed information, money, and ideas to transfer swiftly from one place to another. Coherently, sports were affected by the changes that occurred due to technological innovations. It is also believed that technological advances both facilitate and restrict people's behaviors (Shepherd et al., 2019).

Consistently, globalization has helped sports appear and grow around the world as globalization has influenced cultures (Ataman, 2020). Also, it is supported that interaction between people from various cultures can be promoted through sports (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2013), hence it is fair to think that the multiculturalism of the American ethos would support the spread of its sports and sports culture. In addition, Deissler (2012) stated that sports environments are highly competitive worldwide, and it has been affected by globalization, different cultures, and commercialization, therefore intercultural skills have become essential to leaders in the field of sports to be effective in the strategic domain of today's highly competitive sports sector. It is evident that globalization has taken part in our daily lives to a great extent, that can vary between people and context (Pehoiu and Pehoiu 2012; Ataman 2020; Shepherd et.al 2019).

Pehoiu and Pehoiu (2012), mention that due to the condensation of time and space made by the technology of communication and transportation, humans as individuals transformed into being available anywhere and anytime. Also, Lee and Kim (2016) add that cultural encounters like commerce, missionary work and other types have had football (soccer) developed beside them. Lee and Kim (2016), proceed to explain that sports were born in connection with the cultures and lifestyles of their respective nations. Then, globalization has brought different sports to a global level in various ways depending on the continent of origin and the connection of sports and their cultures. Pehoiu and Pehoiu (2012) and Lee and Kim (2016) mention that globalization is being described as a matter of heightened interdependence all over the world at the various levels of economy, politics, and society. Additionally, Lee and Kim (2016) describe the interdependence between the nations as a two-way road and not a single direction of power from the more developed nations.

Following up with the rationale provided by Lee and Kim (2016), globalization of sports from each continent, it is found that American football is spread around the world as the sport is played in

every continent. However, the level of play varies among countries, but the idea of globalization does not deal with the level of play, at least not directly. Hence, according to Green (2005), In sports development the two main objectives are to increase dynamic sports participation, and to enhance the quality of sports performance. Which is also addressed by Sherry et al., (2016) that the development of sport has come to be of a substantial role in the international sport industry.

2.1.2 Sports Events as a Demonstration of Internationalization

According to Gupta (2009), the beginning of internationalization in sports started with tennis, soccer, and rugby between the 1870s and the 1920s, when international governing bodies were created, with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) being the biggest achievement. Additionally, a significant moment in sports history was when the modern Olympic games began in 1896 in Athens, even though all sports were not included in the Olympic games (International Olympic Committee, 2021). Accordingly, international sport events approach can be very promising, effective, and provide useful tools to sports development (Sherry et al., 2016). Proceeding, this research aims to use globalization in sports as a lens to look at international sport events in relation to the developmental process of American football globally, and in this case the Women's World Championships involving the performance of the national teams that participated over time.

Accordingly, Ataman (2020) stated that mass sports provide valuable means of multiculturalism and coexistence, and its global attendance and contributions should be promoted. Furthermore, Sherry et al., (2016) state that development of sports requires creating channels for participation and to develop talents. While for a reason like market expansion, it is possible to understand the attempts to create high level football products in Europe (Pehoiu & Puşcoci, 2010). Additionally, because of commercialization, sport entrepreneurship is increasing on a global scale (Ratten, 2018), and this can be observed with the most recent product of the European League of Football (ELF) with its inaugural season in 2021. Ultimately, in the context of sport, it can be observed how globalization and commercialization has worked hand in hand for sports to spread all over the world (Andreff, 2008).

2.1.3 American Football Outside the United States of America

Factually, American football is an intense sport (Hoffman, 2008), whether played professionally, semi-professionally, or amateurly, and this is the aura and culture of the sport that is accompanied by it. Besides, the fact that the sport is American made, can be explanatory of having how it is conducted in the USA as reference and background to the various football leagues around the world; furthermore, American football is one of the very effective assertions of the American culture (Van Bottenburg, 2003). Also, a highly funded network of media, sponsors and the largest professional football league presented in the NFL, is doing its best to make the game popular in Europe (Van Bottenburg, 2003). Teams and television time can be acquired yet earning the attention of the Europeans does not seem to be a simple issue (Van Bottenburg, 2003). What is also explained by Van Bottenburg (2003) is that before the late years of the 20th century people were not interested in American football, and there were no factors to encourage people to get interested in such sport. However, football became the most popular sport in America in the later years of the 20th century due to changes in society when sports started to be a part of the social interest. Expectedly, the European interest in American football started later after the game started to attract people's attention. Furthermore, only in the US American football is the number one sport, and soccer comes in fifth after the four biggest sports in North America (Giulianotti, 2013). Also, as explained in Giulianotti (2013), soccer is the world's most popular sport, and in the US, it has great levels of participation in the grassroots, but at the top level it has not seriously challenged the major professional American sports.

In the United States American football is considered a traditional game and the most popular sport (Hoffman, 2008). Besides, as explained by Van Bottenburg (2003) in Europe American football was perceived as a natural competitor to soccer, which is the most successful European sport. From an economic perspective, looking at the spread of the two sports by briefly comparing the final match and game in the biggest competitions in both sports, it is clearly observed that soccer has more coverage and resources. For example, the 2018 FIFA World Cup final was watched live by 1.12 billion viewers (FIFA, 2018), whereas the NFL Super Bowl in 2022 had around 112.3 million viewers (NFL, 2023). And revenue wise, the 2021 Super Bowl revenue was around \$545 million, whereas the 2018 FIFA World Cup revenue was around \$5.36 billion (Odetokun, 2021).

2.2 Management of Sports

Sport management as a field of study involves different aspects of managing and organizing sports and leisure programs, which include clubs, professional teams, events, and facilities. The field of sport management has rapidly grown over the last few decades in study and in practice, which reflects on the growing importance of sports and leisure in today's societies. Accordingly, the literature on sport management has explored various topics, including financial and economic aspects, marketing and sponsorship, facilities management, event management, and social and cultural aspects of sport (Santos & Moreno, 2020). However, our focus will be on the cultural and economic aspects of sport management.

The financial and economic aspects of sport management are of great significance in sport management, in research and in practice and might be considered the most important by some. Researchers have studied the revenue generation and expense management practices of sports organizations, with a focus on the key revenue streams, such as ticket sales, sponsorships, broadcast rights, and advertising (DeGaris, 2015). Within this aspect, researchers have studied the impact of more specific areas like the economics of player salaries on the sport industry (Kahn, 2000). Also, researchers have explored the role of broadcast rights in the economics of sport (Gratton & Solberg, 2007). Moreover, the impact of marketing and sponsorship on the sport industry has been studied, with a focus on the various marketing strategies used by sports organizations and the various types of sponsorships available in the sport industry (Crompton, 2004).

Additionally, the various aspects of facilities management have been explored, including the design and construction of sports facilities, the maintenance and upkeep of sports facilities, and the role of facilities management in the delivery of sports and recreation programs (Dugalic & Krsteska, 2013). Also, the event management aspects of planning, preparation, and execution of sports events are very significant in the field of sport management studies, especially with the increasing numbers of sporting events of different sizes. Other aspects of event management also have been investigated like the role of event management in the delivery of sports and recreation programs, and the impact of event management on the local community and economy (Andersen et al., 2015). Conclusively, sports events management is a major player in theory and in practice as it overlaps

with the entertainment industry. And as a result of the notable growth in the entertainment industry, sport events can be more entertainment oriented than ever before.

Furthermore, the body of research addresses the cultural significance of sport, health and well-being, with a focus on the role of sport in promoting social cohesion, and the impact of sport on society (Moustakas, 2021).

2.2.1 Cultural Aspects

In the context of sport management, it is useful to mention the concept of glocalization referring to the ways in which sport organizations are influenced by both global and local cultural forces, and how they respond to these influences by implementing practices that are both globally recognized and culturally specific (Robertson & Buhari-Gulmez, 2016). Glocalization also refers to the adaptation of global practices to local contexts, or the integration of local practices into global structures (Szerovay et al., 2015)

Additionally, according to Cousens and Barnes (2009), cultural embeddedness refers to the extent to which an organization is embedded in the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of its host environment. Cultural embeddedness can also be observed through the ways in which sport organizations and their stakeholders, such as athletes, fans, and communities, are shaped by cultural norms and values related to sport. Which is something Houlihan (2003) suggested as assessing the depth of cultural embeddedness. This can include beliefs about what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behavior, importance of health and wellness in sport, and behaviors towards competition and winning.

Hence, in sport management these concepts can play a key role in shaping the ways in which sport organizations interact with their local communities and engage with various stakeholders. For example, a sport organization that is culturally embedded in a specific local environment may be better equipped to understand and respond to the needs and expectations of its local audience (Dequech, 2003).

Hence, through glocalization processes, sports organizations respond to the influence of global and local cultural forces. Also, that glocalization is a key aspect of the globalization of cultures, and

that it is an important factor to consider in sport management (Robertson and Buhari-Gulmez, 2016).

Giulianotti and Robertson (2007) argue that the process of glocalization has had a significant impact on the way sport is managed and marketed, as well as the ways in which consumers engage with sport. Also, the process of glocalization has significant implications for the management of sport, including the creation of new opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration and the emergence of new cultural identities.

Dequech (2003) also discusses the role of cultural embeddedness in shaping the ways in which sport and culture intersect in the context of globalization. Thus, glocalization can help organizations balance their global reach and local relevance by adopting practices that are globally recognized, while still being culturally specific to their local context.

For further illustration, the connection between glocalization and cultural embeddedness in sport management can be seen in the ways in which sport organizations are influenced by global trends and local cultural aspects, and how they respond to these influences by adopting practices that are both globally recognized and culturally specific (Cousens & Barnes, 2009). For example, a sports organization may adopt a global practice related to community welfare, but they may also need to modify that practice to reflect the cultural norms and values of their local community. In this fashion, sport organizations are constantly balancing the demands of globalization and localization, and the ways in which they respond to these demands is influenced by their cultural embeddedness.

In conclusion, glocalization and cultural embeddedness are two important concepts in the field of sport management, as they help us understand the complex ways in which sport organizations are influenced by both global and local cultural forces, and how they respond to these influences in ways that are both globally recognized and culturally appropriate.

2.2.2 Economic Aspects

The economic aspect of sport management is a large and fundamental component of the establishment and overall success of a sports organization. This aspect deals with the financial and

business-related aspects of sports organizations, and its study involves analyzing revenue generation, expense management, and budgeting.

Revenue generation is a significant component of sport management as it affects the organization's ability to maintain its financial stability. Ticket sales, sponsorships, and broadcast rights are some of the ways intended for income generation for sport organizations. For example, the majority of sports organizations derive a significant amount of income from ticket sales for various events. According to Fenn (2012) on average, ticketing and concessions make up about 25 percent of the National Football League (NFL) revenue. Whilst television revenues make up about 50 percent of the total revenue. Also, sports organizations receive a significant amount of their funding from sponsorships, which they use to market brands' goods and services to fans and supporters. Additionally, sponsorships are another significant source of revenue for sports organizations, as they partner with brands to promote their products and services to fans. As reported by Raskin (2023), the sponsorship revenue for the NFL 2022 season reached \$2.7 billion. Moreover, broadcasting rights are also an important source of revenue, as they enable sports organizations to broadcast their games to fans via television and online platforms. For many sports organizations, the sale of broadcast rights now represents a significant portion of revenue (Fenn, 2012).

On the other hand, the outflow of money in the form of expense management is another critical aspect of the economic component of sport management. Consequently, sports organizations must manage their expenses such as players' salaries, travel costs, facilities maintenance, and development, among other elements, in order to maintain their financial stability. For example, players' salaries are a significant expense for most sports organizations, as they must pay their players for their services. According to Brown (2019), In 2018, Major League Baseball (MLB) spent \$5.1 billion as players' compensation, making 54.8 percent out of the revenue that year. In addition, travel costs are another significant expense for sports organizations, as they must cover these costs presented in accommodation, and transportation for their players and staff. As mentioned by Wertheim (2018), about \$3.5 million are spent on charter aviation. Maintenance of facilities is yet another expense to be accounted for as sports organizations must maintain and upgrade their facilities to provide a safe and comfortable environment for their players and fans. According to Long (2005) there was an increase of \$50 million per facility to a total of \$177 million, marking over a 40 percent increase than the average which is \$126 million.

In conclusion, the economic side of sport management is a crucial factor in the success of sports organizations. Hence, to maintain their long-term sustainability, sports organizations must carefully manage their aforementioned financial resources.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research task and methodology, beginning with a clear presentation of the study's main objectives. The section then moves on to discuss the qualitative research design and the implementation of the study.

3.1 Aims and Purpose of the Study

The research aims to understand small sports through exploring, giving understanding, and shedding light on the challenges, and opportunities as a part of the development process of women's American football. Accordingly, the study looks at the sport of women's American football from a global lens while zooming in on the international women's American football environment including the national teams in the WWC (Women's World Championship) environment with the focus on the Finnish and the American national teams. Additionally, considering the investigation of the women's American football environments the study reflects on the Finnish approach to women's football nationally and internationally in reflection with the US approach.

The following research questions are in line to achieve the aims of the study:

- 1) How is women's American football organized in the USA and in Finland based on the background data collected and the perceptions of American and Finnish experiences by the interviewees from both countries?
- 2) What is the nature of international competition in the IFAF Women's World Championship according to the descriptive analysis conducted in this research?
- 3) What are the challenges and opportunities presented in women's football globally, in Finland, and in USA according to American and Finnish interviewees point of views?

These research questions are addressed in the following chapters by examining past and present states, and future possibilities within the local and international women's football environments. The first research question is addressed in chapter four under the name "Background on women's American football chapter" and in chapter six under the name "Dynamics of Women's American Football". Chapter four is primarily produced from secondary data, while chapter six is completely

established from the results of the conducted interviews. Then, the second research question is addressed by analyzing the IFAF Women's World Championship competitions in chapter five under the name "International women's American football". Chapter five is produced from the numerical results of the games played in the different WWC competitions that was collected from online sources, confirmed from the literature by Crawford (2022), and further ratified by some of the various numerical analysis produced by this study. After that, the third question is addressed in chapter six by demonstrating the results from the interviews under the name "Dynamics of women's American football". Finally, all the previous points are discussed and connected in "Discussion" chapter.

3.2 Qualitative Research

This thesis research is utilizing descriptive qualitative research to discuss the situation of Women's American football globally focusing on Finland and the USA. Utilizing a qualitative research method enables researching how women's American football is working globally. Additionally, this study investigates challenges and opportunities of women's American football in Finland and in USA. This approach also utilizes the collection of text, images, observations, and interviews as data for interpretation according to themes, codes, or content (Suter, 2012). Also, the study utilizes secondary research data collected from online American football sources concerning the niche of women's American football.

Moreover, this research utilizes an analytical qualitative research approach to analyze the results produced in the WWC events. This approach involves analyzing data into its constituent parts to then draw conclusions. This method involves systematic analysis and interpretation of data to identify trends and relationships among the different elements of data collected. Analytical qualitative research involves recursive and iterative processes (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Given that Finland has hosted this event for the second time it is more compelling to research this successful host's national team in the WWC international setting. Also, studying the Finnish football environment including the national team in the IFAF Women's World Championship event can be useful to address matters related to the function and meaning of the sport. Accordingly, the

performance of the Finnish national team will be evaluated in comparison to their performance in the previous versions and other equally participating teams. Therefore, the study looks at available statistics as sources of data to analyze and compare tournament results, along with semi-structured interviews with different four contributors with different roles in the domain of women's American football.

Eventually, the analytical portion of the study aims to provide more context to the challenges and possibilities of the sport, while also providing a look at the progress of the sport internationally. All of which, according to IFAF, plays a part in their commitment to secure their full recognition from the IOC, leading them to campaigning for American football to be included in the Olympic games (IFAF, 2023).

3.3 Implementation of the Study

This research is studying women's American football as a small sport. Hence, the initiative of studying this segment of the sport should provide collected data and information from primary and secondary sources for the benefit of women's American football research, and potential stakeholders in this segment of the sport, possibly for the first time.

Included in the research are some performances indicating areas of the national teams that participated in different versions of the IFAF WWC competitions, with a focus on the Finnish national team for insights on their placements in the different events. Moreover, the interview with the long time Finnish national team manager will provide context to the results of the national team in the IFAF WWC competition. Hence, providing a reflection on the development of women's American football as a sport in Finland through the national team's performance in the WWC events.

The study employs effective tools for qualitative research: data collection from online sources, interviews, descriptive analysis, and thematic analysis. The data and information collected from online sources are necessary to report numerical data, relevant incidents concerned with the local and international forms of the sport, and to provide insight on the matters related to international American football. For the interviews part, four total interviewees participated, in which two of

them were Finnish and two were Americans. Therefore, the interviews, which their outlines are available in the appendix, include information about the Finnish environment, American environment, and their point of views about the global context. Two of these interviews were conducted in person during the duration of the 2022 WWC event in Vantaa, Finland. Whereas the other two interviews were done remotely online in 2023. The interviews were semi-structured and allowed for unplanned questions. Additionally, the interviews in the study are labeled with letters and numbers; “A” for American interviewees, and “F” for Finnish interviewees. The numbers represent the order of when the interviews were conducted. Eventually, it is easy and on the spot for the reader to identify where the presented point of view is coming from.

The opportunity to interview A1 and F1 respectively in person was facilitated by being present at the Women’s World Championship event, and the interviews were conducted on July 31st and August 2nd. Both interviews took about two hours and ten minutes in total. The interviews were recorded by my mobile phone, then transcribed with Microsoft Word transcription feature. Then, the transcribed text was proofread while listening to the interview recording. After that, I analyzed the data through thematic analysis by gathering the answers to the questions asked during the interviews. The themes will be demonstrated in Figure 6 in the chapter of “Dynamics of Women’s American Football”. F2 and A2 interviews were conducted and transcribed via Microsoft Teams on March 7th, and April 5th respectively. Both interviews were more structured than the previous in person interviews. Then, the interviews were transcribed, proofread, and listened to. After that, the same analysis process was done on the interviews.

Furthermore, descriptive analysis examines the IFAF Women’s World Championship by looking at all competition results. Then provide analysis on each year’s games results separately and collectively, while consistently providing analysis on the Finnish performance in each tournament. After that, the study provides a deeper look on the WWC event results over time concerning the teams who participated in all the tournament editions since 2010. The independent analysis for the US, Canadian, and Finnish national teams over time look at wins and losses metrics, plus points metrics. Overall, the study utilizes a diverse approach to collect and analyze empirical data, including descriptive analysis of numerical data and thematic analysis of interviews data. This

approach brings to light and discusses key and dynamic areas in women's football considering past, present, and future endeavors.

4 BACKGROUND ON WOMEN'S AMERICAN FOOTBALL

This chapter introduces the history, national leagues, and national teams in the USA and in Finland respectively. Laying out these aspects of women's American football is necessary to understand how the sport is organized and functioning in those two different countries.

4.1 Background on Women's American Football in the USA

Women's American football in the USA has gained popularity over the years. It is played with the same rules and equipment as men's American football, but with a few modifications to accommodate for differences in physical strength and size. The sport is organized and regulated by various leagues.

4.1.1 History of Women's American Football in the USA

The United States of America has the most extended history in women's American football, as women started playing football in 1892 (Cielquiarle, 2022). The American Great Depression led to the greatest growth of women's football beginning in 1939. Since softball was the most popular female sport at the start of the 20th century, the Marshall-Clampett Amazons of Los Angeles was originally a softball team. In order to entertain their large audience during the off-season for softball, these women initially formed a football team (Westly, 2016). However, the game did not gain widespread popularity until the 1970s, when women's liberation movements and Title IX paved the way for greater gender equality in opportunity in sports (Miller, 2009).

Title IX requires that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Ever since Title IX was presented, it affected women's sports in general, and American Football in specific, as it allowed women to play on a professional level. Title IX discloses that if a school/college provides a boys' team for a certain

sport, girls can join the boys' team if no equivalent girls' team is provided (Women of Troy Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Title IX, 2022).

4.1.2 Women's National Leagues in USA

As American Football gained popularity in the United States, more leagues were established. In 2000, Catherine Masters established the National Women's Football Association (NWFA), an all-women football league. After the 2002 season, the league formerly known as the National Women's Football League was forced to change its name from "League" to "Association" to sound less like the NFL due to pressure from the NFL. The NFL also forced the association to change some of the teams' logos as they looked like logos in the NFL. Later, the league was called off in 2008 (Frazier, n.d.).

In addition, the Independent Women's Football League (IWFL) was founded in 2000 by Laurie Fredrick (Crawford, 2022). It's a league created by women football players for women football players as the league played its first season in 2001, and it lasted until 2018 ("Independent Women's Football League", 2023). The IWFL reached its highest point in 2010, with 42 competing teams in 2 divisions (Crawford, 2022).

Another major league in the United States is the Women's Football Alliance (WFA), which was established in 2009. According to the Women's Football Alliance (2023) It is considered the biggest/largest and most competitive 11 on 11 women's league in the world, despite the fact that women's tackle football has been taking place for over 40 years. The WFA welcomes athletes from all over the United States regardless of their financial abilities. Additionally, the WFA's non-profit business model encouraged community and corporate sponsorship. Also, the WFA aims to offer support to women's tackle football leagues in Europe, Africa, and Central and South America through operating its international division program, which includes organizing international competitions (Women's Football Alliance, 2023). The WFA has begun their mission to create "sister teams" that aim to form a partnership between WFA Teams and International Teams. The primary objective of the sister team program is to mentor players and coaches of international teams and donate essential equipment to these programs. Additionally, the WFA encourages sister teams to host or travel to their partner program and offer camps, clinics, and friendly games.

There is also the Women's National Football Conference (WNFC), which was founded in 2018, and played its first season in 2019. The WNFC is an amateur tackle American Football league, reaching its 4th season in 2023. The league is sponsored by Adidas, Dick's sporting goods, Riddell, and Humbl. The league has 16 teams competing against each other. The organization's main mission is for girls and women to have an equitable opportunity to play sports. They work on empowering women and including everyone without any discrimination through the power of Football (WNFC, 2023).

The US Women's Football League (WSFL) is a women's American football minor league that initially held exhibition matches in 2010 and began its regular season in 2011. The league was previously called the "Women's Spring Football League" from 2009 to 2015. The league also had 11 on 11 and 8 on 8 divisions from 2011 to 2013. In 2014, the league split into two separate leagues, with the 11 on 11 division retaining the WSFL name, and the 8 on 8 division named the Women's Eights Football League (W8FL). Since 2016, the league only had the 11 on 11 football division ("United States Women's Football League", 2022).

Women's American football in the US has experienced different phases throughout history generating a story of resilience, and progress. From the early days of high school games to the formation of major women's football leagues, female athletes have continued to push for greater recognition and support for their sport. Looking into the future, it is important to continue supporting and promoting women's American football at all levels.

4.1.3 America's Women's National Team

The United States women's national team is currently ranked no.1 in the IFAF national teams ranks. The team is operated by USA Football besides being recognized by the International Federation of American Football (IFAF), the global governing body of American football (USA Football, 2023).

USA Football is an organization that functions as the official governing body for amateur American football in the United States (USA Football, 2023). Headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA Football was founded in 2002 (“USA Football”, 2023). Recognized by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USA Football, 2023). The organization works in partnership with the NFL to promote the sport, and its primary goal is to provide a positive experience for all participants including youth football leagues, coaches, and parents. USA Football offers comprehensive education and training programs for coaches and officials to enhance their knowledge and skills, as well as initiatives focused on player safety (USA Football, 2023a). Overall, the organization provides valuable resources for parents and players.

Callie Brownson is currently the head coach of the women’s national team. Brownson also serves as the team’s Chief of staff and assistant wide receivers coach for the NFL’s Cleveland Browns (USA Football, 2022). Some notable players who have played for the team include Jen Welter, who became the first female coach in the NFL in 2015 (Seifert, 2022).

The United States has a rich history when it comes to American Football, but the first true presence for the women’s national team was in 2010 in the IFAF’s women’s world championship. The United States played against Canada in Stockholm, Sweden, and won with a score of 66-0. They also participated in the four versions of the Women’s World Championship (2010, 2013, 2017, 2022), and won gold every time dominating the tournament (USA Football, 2023).

4.2 Background on women's American football in Finland

Women's American football in Finland is organized differently than in the USA. It is played in different divisions under the supervision of the (SAJL). In addition, the Finnish national team had success over the years in different competitions.

4.2.1 History of Women's American football in Finland

The American Football Association of Finland (SAJL) was founded in 1979, after some high school exchange students returned from the United States to Finland in the late 1970's. Currently, the Finnish association has 33 club teams, and about 3000 licensed players in the four-men leagues, three-women leagues, and in youth categories (Jenkkifutis, 2022a). SAJL also organizes flag football activities in Finland. Additionally, SAJL is a member of the International Federation of American Football (IFAF), and the Finnish Olympic Committee (Jenkkifutis, 2023a).

Participating in team sports, especially American football, can teach valuable values to athletes. According to SAJL's website, the challenges encountered in football can help players learn how to overcome themselves and push themselves. Football also instills the importance of respecting united work and other people, as the sport heavily relies on teamwork. Additionally, athletes who play football are taught social skills and cooperation as they work together with their teammates. Punctuality and discipline are also essential values that football players learn, as they need to arrive on time for practices and games and adhere to strict schedules. The commitment that is required to play football also helps athletes learn the importance of dedication and perseverance. Lastly, football provides an opportunity for athletes to develop their leadership skills by leading their teams on and off the field (Jenkkifutis, 2023d).

4.2.2 Women's National Leagues in Finland

Women's American Football in Finland has several leagues and divisions. The divisions and leagues are divided into four categories between tackle football and flag football. The highest level of women's tackle football is the Women's Maple League, which is followed by Division 1, then Division 2 (Jenkkifutis, 2023c).

Women's tackle football environment can be considered relatively unstable or highly interchangeable, as American football in Finland operates in a relegation and promotion system between the divisions with teams having the freedom to accept or decline their promotion eligibility. Additionally, the Women's Maple League has four of the teams preparing to compete in the 2023 season. For example, the Oulu Northern Lights will join the Maple League division for the first time in the 2023 season as they won the women's I-division twice in a row, which allows them to compete in the Maple League (Jenkkifutis, 2023e). Worth noting that some teams can win their division and choose not to be promoted to the higher division. This can be due to different reasons that teams elect to take such measures, and it can be due to a team's limited resources, which can resemble a challenge to be competitive in the higher division.

Following the Maple league is division-I with 5 competing teams in the 2023 season. Lastly is division-II with 5 teams that will compete in that division in the 2023 season. Division-II is having some movement this year, as the Butchers the 2022 champions along with the Falcons will create a combined team, and it will be the first year for Pirkkala Spartans to join women's tackle football (Jenkkifutis, 2023c).

4.2.3 Blue Lion's Women's National Teams

The women's national flag football team has a remarkable history of success in international competitions since the early days of the national team's tournament participation in 2004. The team's best performance was in 2005 when they won gold at the European Championship in Helsinki. The team also joined in the European Championship in 2009 and secured second place winning silver. Furthermore, the team participated four times in the World Championships competitions in the years 2004, 2006, 2014, and 2021. The national team is currently aspiring to join the Olympics in 2028 (Jenkkifutis, 2023b).

From the research results according to F2 in our interview, the history of Flag Football dates to a lot earlier than when the national team was created. Because she mentioned noticing that women were playing flag football in Finland around 1989-1990. Flag football was different from what it is now, she continues, as it was a 9 on 9 semi-contact without shoulder pads. She also mentioned

that the game changed a lot throughout the years until it reached a form closer to what we know now in 2000, when women played 7 on 7 “Semi Contact Football” without shoulder pads.

The women’s national team activities for tackle football began in 2008 when Finland competed against Sweden and won 64-0 (Jenkkifutis, 2023). The national team has been on an upward slope since. As they participated in all the important tournaments like the European championships, and the four versions of the Women’s World Championship, winning bronze 3 times (Jenkkifutis, 2023).

4.3 International Federation of American Football

The International Federation of American Football (IFAF) is the organization that oversees all international regulations, competitions, performances, and game development for the sport of American football (IFAF, 2023). IFAF is the organizer of a lot of prestigious American football events for men and women. They are responsible for organizing events like the senior men’s world championship, senior women’s world championship, U20 men’s world championship, senior men’s world flag football championship, senior women’s flag football championship, continental flag football championships, and continental tackle football championships (IFAF, 2023b).

The International Federation of American Football was formally established in 1998 (IFAF, 2023). However, according to IFAF (2023) Canada was the first country outside of the United States to establish a national federation for American football in 1896, followed by Japan in 1936, and in 1976, the European Federation was established. Since then, the sport has significantly grown, particularly in Europe.

Currently, IFAF has 74 members, distributed among five continental branches: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania (IFAF, 2023c). IFAF’s headquarters is in La Courneuve, France, and the current president is Pierre Trochet. IFAF’s goal is to support the principles of sport and education while also promoting and developing American football on a global scale. It also aims to encourage international cooperation among its members. (IFAF, 2023).

On the other hand, previously, IFAF had a conflict that led to its splitting in 2015, that was when a group of national federations held a meeting in Paris and elected a new board of directors headed by Tommy Wiking of Sweden. That meeting sparked conflict as Wiking claimed that Noronen was not rightful of his position, and Wiking didn't resign and was only on sick leave until May 2015 (McKeon & Kelly, 2015). Wiking launched legal action in a try to regain his position, but in 2017 the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled that Wiking was not rightful for acting as the president of IFAF, and that Noronen was elect as an interim president for IFAF since July 2015, followed by Richard MacLean in September 2016 (Hafner, 2022; Court of Arbitration for Sport, 2017).

The board presided by Noronen refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Paris meeting and carried on as the recognized IFAF board. This resulted in two boards with two different logos and websites competing to officially represent IFAF (McKeon & Kelly, 2015). This conflict lasted for 4 years, until the (CAS) decided that the Paris meeting was an illegal meeting and that the previous board should remain the IFAF board. Moreover, the court ordered the two boards to reunify and hold new elections, and so the reunification was completed in 2020, at an extraordinary congress in New York, with Richard MacLean of Canada serving as president, since he published a letter that declared him the president since 2016 until March 2021 when MacLean announced that he will be stepping down as he believes he guided IFAF out of the turbulence and is proud of his work. After that, Pierre Trochet was elected as the president of IFAF later in December 2021 (Burke, 2021).

IFAF gained provisional recognition from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 2013 (IFAF, 2023e). IFAF's vision includes gaining full recognition from the IOC, as well as for football to be included in the Olympic Games (IFAF, 2023e). Moreover, IFAF's mission is to organize and promote continental competitions, providing guidance and education to the football community without any discrimination to increase its growth. (IFAF, 2023).

4.3.1 Women's World Championships

The Women's World Championship organized by the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) is rather recent, with the first tournament only taking place in 2010. The

tournament was created to promote and grow the sport of American football among women on a global scale providing top female players from around the world with an opportunity to compete against each other. According to IFAF's strategy, "IFAF is committed to securing Full Recognition from the IOC and campaigning for football to be included in the Olympic Games – the greatest stage of all; giving our athletes a chance to shine and to inspire future generations." (IFAF, 2023e).

The first IFAF Women's World Championship was held between June 27th and July 3rd, 2010, in Stockholm Sweden (Crawford, 2022), with teams from six countries competing, including the United States, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Austria, and Germany. The tournament was considered a success, helping lay down a foundation for the growth of women's American football. The United States won the championship, followed by Canada in the 2nd place (Crawford, 2022), and Finally Finland in the 3rd place winning bronze ("2010 IFAF Women's World Championship", 2019; Jenkkifutis, 2023).

Then, the second IFAF Women's World Championship was held in Vantaa, Finland in June 2013, with teams from six countries, including the United States, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Germany, and Spain, and it was the first year for Spain to compete in the championship. The United States won the championship again, followed by Canada taking second (Crawford, 2022), then Finland taking third ("2013 IFAF Women's World Championship", 2021; Jenkkifutis, 2023).

After that, the third IFAF Women's World Championship was held in Langley City, British Columbia, Canada in June 2017 (Crawford 2022). The tournament again had six countries competing, including the United States, Canada, and Finland for their third time. While the three other countries that participated for the first time were Australia, Great Britain, and Mexico. For the third time, the United States took first place, followed by Canada in second place, then Mexico in third place ("2017 IFAF Women's World Championship", 2022; Crawford, 2022).

Women's football has given many female players the opportunity to compete in an official world championship, which is something that many male players cannot claim (Crawford, 2022). The Women's World Championship (WWC) has been sponsored by the International Federation of

American Football (IFAF) and national federations in sixteen countries in 2010, 2013, and 2017 (Crawford, 2022).

Finally, the fourth and biggest IFAF Women's World Championship was held for the second time in Vantaa, Finland between July, and August 2022 (Jenkkifutis, 2022). The tournament had the greatest number of participating teams in its history with eight teams competing. Those teams were the United States, Canada, Mexico, Finland, Sweden, Great Britain, Australia, and Germany (Jenkkifutis, 2022). The US took first place, followed by - and for the first time - Great Britain in second place, then Finland took third place for the third time (Jenkkifutis, 2022).

The championship is currently being dominated by the United States National Football Team winning the four titles. However, in the most recent version in 2022, the US team was challenged for the first time by the Finnish national team and Great Britain national team. The Finnish National Team even managed to outscore the US team in the first half. Also, for the first time, the championship game didn't have Canada and the United States battling it out. Which can be considered as progress in the level of performance in international women's American football. Overall, the level of competition was higher than ever, with many exciting games throughout the tournament. The tournament was a major success and continued to raise the profile of women's American football and further its growth on a global scale.

It is reasonable to say the IFAF Women's World Championship provides a legitimate platform for American football female athletes to showcase their talent and athleticism, and it has helped to increase visibility and recognition for the sport providing value for this sport among women and other crowds. Additionally, the tournament has provided a valuable opportunity for players to develop their skills and knowledge of the sport, and to connect with other players and teams from around the world. All in all, the IFAF Women's World Championship has been an important event for development in the growth of women's American football and has helped to create a more inclusive and diverse sports culture.

5 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S AMERICAN FOOTBALL

In this chapter of the research, an analysis is provided of the IFAF Women's World Championships tournaments including the 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2022 editions. The analyses are in chronological order and based on the outcome of the games and tournaments overall as will be illustrated in the following text, tables, and figures. Also, in this chapter each tournament analysis will be followed by analysis of the Finnish national team in the championship event. After that, included is an over-time analysis for the WWC event paired with the three teams who participated in all editions of the championship for progress reflections.

5.1 Women's World Championships Analyses

The analyses provided in this chapter will utilize tables for the games played in each edition, followed by tournament analysis table, then further explained by text, and all of which are labelled by the year.

5.1.1 Results and Analysis: 2010 WWC

Tables 1 and 2 below will demonstrate the games played and the analyses provided for the participating teams in the 2010 WWC tournament. Then, the tables and analyses will be further elaborated on in the following text.

TABLE 1: Games played in the 2010 WWC tournament.

Game	Team 1	Score 1	Team 2	Score 2
	Austria	0	United States	63
	Finland	50	Austria	16
	United States	72	Finland	0
	Canada	12	Sweden	6
	Sweden	0	Germany	14
	Germany	12	Canada	20
5th place	Sweden	20	Austria	18
3rd place	Finland	26	Germany	18
Final	Canada	0	United States	66

TABLE 2: Tournament analysis of the 2010 WWC.

Team	Win-Loss Record	Total Points Scored	Total Points Allowed	Point Differential	Percentage of total points scored	Percentage of total points allowed
United States	3-0	201	0	201	49%	0%
Canada	2-1	32	84	-52	8%	20%
Finland	2-1	76	106	-30	18%	26%
Germany	1-2	44	46	-2	11%	11%
Sweden	1-2	26	44	-18	6%	11%
Austria	0-3	34	133	-99	8%	32%
Total		413	413	0	100%	100%

By observing the results of the first IFAF Women's World Championship in 2010, it can be observed that the United States national team was clearly a dominant force, winning all their games convincingly and ultimately winning the tournament while accounting for 49 percent of the total

points scored in the tournament, and accounting for none of the total points allowed. Also, Canada had a successful tournament, finishing in second place after losing only in the final game against the United States. However, the discrepancy in the total points for and total points against between the 1st and 2nd place holders is quite the difference. Besides, Finland performed well, finishing in third place.

On the other hand, Sweden and Austria struggled in the tournament as Austria lost all its games, and Sweden only won against Austria. Germany also won one game only against Sweden, and ultimately losing to Finland in the game for third place.

Overall, the results of this tournament suggest that the United States national team was dominant by a huge margin in the first women's American football world championship as they managed to allow zero points in three games. Only Canada's and Finland's national teams' performances secured them two wins overall. These results also highlight the varying levels of performance and competitiveness in the tournament, with some teams struggling to compete at the international level in the first ever IFAF Women's World Championship.

In the 2010 tournament, Finland won two games against Austria and Germany, and lost one against the dominant United States. They finished second in their group and played against Germany for 3rd place. Finland won that game and finished in 3rd in the tournament placements.

From an outcome point of view, the Finnish national team is considered competitive as the team was able to secure a spot in the placement games. In addition, the team scored 10 percent more points than the second-place holder, with only six percent more in points allowed, and a better point differential with 22 points less. Eventually, winning 3rd place in the first ever Women's World Championship for tackle football.

5.1.2 Results and Analysis: 2013 WWC

Tables 3 and 4 below will demonstrate the games played and the analyses provided for the participating teams in the 2013 WWC tournament. Then, the tables and analyses will be further elaborated on in the following text.

TABLE 3: Games played in the 2013 WWC tournament.

Game	Team 1	Score 1	Team 2	Score 2
Group A Game 1	United States	84	Sweden	0
Group A Game 2	Sweden	14	Germany	25
Group A Game 3	Germany	7	United States	107
Group B Game 1	Finland	47	Spain	0
Group B Game 2	Spain	0	Canada	50
Group B Game 3	Canada	34	Finland	12
5th Place Game	Sweden	64	Spain	0
3rd Place Game	Germany	19	Finland	20
Final	United States	64	Canada	0

TABLE 4: Tournament analysis of the 2013 WWC.

Team	Win-Loss Record	Total Points Scored	Total Points Allowed	Point Differential	Percentage of total points scored	Percentage of total points allowed
United States	3-0	255	7	248	47%	1%
Canada	2-1	84	76	8	15%	14%
Finland	2-1	79	53	26	14%	10%
Germany	1-2	51	141	-90	9%	26%
Spain	0-3	0	161	-161	0%	29%

Sweden	1-2	78	109	-31	14%	20%
Total		547	547	0	100%	100%

The tournament featured two groups of three teams each, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the placements stage. In Group A, the United States dominated by winning all their games by a combined score of 191-7. Germany secured the second spot in the group with a win over Sweden, while Sweden finished last in its group and was eliminated.

In Group B, Finland and Canada were the top two teams, with Finland winning their matchup against Spain, and Canada winning both of their games. Spain finished in last place and was eliminated.

The championship game was a one-sided matchup, with the United States winning 64-0 against Canada to secure their second consecutive Women's World Championship.

Canada, and Finland took second and third respectively, with each team winning multiple games. However, Sweden and Spain struggled in the tournament as the only game that Sweden won was against Spain who had zero wins on their record. Obviously, The United States continued to dominate women's American football on the international stage, winning all their games by a large margin and securing their second consecutive championship, accounting for 47percent of the total points scored in the tournament, and only one percent of the total points allowed. Again, the difference in the percentage of total points scored between the US team and the nearest team is huge with a 32 percent difference. In Fact, all the other teams combined account for 53 percent of the total points scored vs the US 47 percent.

Overall, the tournament showed the continued efforts of women's American football internationally with more countries participating. However, it also highlighted the large gap in talent and experience between the United States and the other national teams, which could present a challenge for the sport's long-term growth and sustainability.

Finland participated in Group B in the 2013 tournament and played three games. In their first game, they defeated Spain with a score of 47-0. In their second game, they lost to Canada with a score of 12-34. With winning a game and losing the other in the group stage, the Finnish national team still

qualified for the placement stage. In the game for third place, Finland narrowly won against Germany with a score of 20-19.

Looking at the outcomes of the games, we can see that Finland started strong with a dominant win against Spain in the opening game, but then faced a tough Canadian team in the second game and lost by a considerable margin. They rebounded with a close win against Germany in the placement game taking 3rd place. While the Finnish team accounted for 14% of the total points scored in the tournament, the team allowed 10 percent of the total points allowed in the tournament which is the closest to the US' championship team allowed one percent.

5.1.3 Results and Analysis: 2017 WWC

Tables 5 and 6 below will demonstrate the games played and the analyses provided for the participating teams in the 2017 WWC tournament. Then, the tables and analyses will be further elaborated on in the following text.

TABLE 5: Games played in the 2017 WWC tournament.

Game	Team 1	Score 1	Team 2	Score 2
Game 1	Great Britain	27	Finland	21
Game 2	Mexico	0	United States	29
Game 3	Australia	6	Canada	31
Game 1	Mexico	31	Australia	10
Game 2	Finland	0	United States	48
Game 3	Great Britain	0	Canada	35
5th Place	Finland	35	Australia	0
3rd Place	Great Britain	8	Mexico	19
Final	United States	41	Canada	16

TABLE 6: Tournament analysis of the 2017 WWC.

Team	Win-Loss Record	Total Points scored	Total Points Allowed	Point Differential	Percentage of total points scored	Percentage of total points allowed
United States	3-0	118	16	102	33%	4%
Canada	2-1	82	47	35	23%	13%
Mexico	2-1	50	47	3	14%	13%
Great Britain	1-2	35	75	-40	10%	21%
Finland	1-2	56	75	-19	16%	21%

Australia	0-3	16	97	-81	4%	27%
Total		357	357	0	100%	100%

Looking at the 2017 tournament, it is observed that the total points scored/allowed is noticeably lower than in previous years. Nevertheless, it's clear that the United States dominated their opponents, winning all their games and taking home the championship title.

Canada also had a strong showing, winning their first two games before yet again losing to the United States in the championship game. However, that year was among their home crowd, and the 16 points scored by the Canadian team was the first time to do so against the US team. In fact, it was only the second time for any team to score against the US, and the first time for any team to score more than seven points. Thus, the first time the US allowed any points in the final game matchup.

Mexico started off with a loss to the United States but then won their next two games. After Mexico beat Australia, they went on to beat Great Britain taking 3rd place for the first time.

Finland, on the other hand, lost their first game to Great Britain by six points only, followed by a bigger loss to the USA without scoring any points. Then, finally winning their only game against Australia by allowing 0 points and scoring 35 points, with a better outcome than Mexico's win against Australia. Great Britain won their first game against Finland but then suffered a loss to Mexico and finished 4th after Mexico. Despite Finland and Great Britain having a similar losing record of 1-2 in that tournament, the Finnish team managed to score 6% more points in total while allowing for the same number of points. Thus, resulting in a better points differential.

Australia had a disappointing tournament, losing all three of their games and finishing in last place scoring only 16 points and allowing 97 points with a huge point differential deficit of -81 points. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that the 3 teams furthest from the tournament's location had the poorest performances compared to the 3 other participants, indicating that location has a role in teams' performance.

In the 2017 tournament, Finland won one of their three games, earning a 1-2 record. They managed to only defeat the last place holder Australia and lost to Great Britain and the United States. Based

on these results, their performance was not good enough to proceed to placement games for the first time, and not earn a medal.

In their win, Finland outscored their opponent by 35-0. However, in their losses, they were outscored by a combined 75-21, indicating that they struggled against stronger opponents. Overall, Finland's performance in the 2017 tournament resulted in scoring 56 points, allowing 75 points, and a point differential of -19. Which translates to 16 percent of the total points scored in the tournament, and 21 percent of the total points allowed.

5.1.4 Results and Analysis: 2022 WWC

Tables 7 and 8 below will demonstrate the games played and the analyses provided for the participating teams in the 2022 WWC tournament. Then, the tables and analyses will be further elaborated on in the following text.

TABLE 7: Games played in the 2022 WWC tournament.

Game	Team 1	Score	Team 2	Score
	Great Britain	N/A	Mexico	N/A
	Canada	33	Australia	6
	Finland	49	Sweden	0
	United States	63	Germany	0
	Mexico	34	Australia	6
	Germany	6	Sweden	0
	United States	28	Finland	10
	Great Britain	20	Canada	13
	Australia	7	Sweden	0
	Mexico	28	Germany	0
3rd place	Finland	19	Canada	17
Final	United States	42	Great Britain	14

TABLE 8: Tournament analysis of the 2022 WWC.

Team	Win-Loss Record	Total Points Scored	Total Points Allowed	Point Differential	Percentage of total points scored	Percentage of total points allowed
United States	3-0	133	24	109	34%	6%
Canada	1-2	63	45	18	16%	11%
Mexico	2-1	62	6	56	16%	2%
Finland	2-1	78	45	33	20%	11%

Sweden	0-3	0	62	-62	0%	16%
Great Britain	2-1	34	55	-21	9%	14%
Australia	1-2	19	67	-48	5%	17%
Germany	1-2	6	91	-85	2%	23%
Total		395	395	0	100%	100%

Observing the 2022 tournament tables, we can see an increase in teams participating from six teams in the previous tournaments to eight teams in the latest event. However, the United States was still dominant throughout the tournament, winning all their games and taking home the championship. Finland also had a strong showing, winning all their games except for the one against the United States, and ultimately winning the 3rd place in a close win against Canada.

There were some lopsided games, such as the United States' 63-0 victory against Germany, and Finland's 49-0 victory against their rival Sweden. Nevertheless, there were also some close matches, such as the 19-17 victory by Finland over Canada in the 3rd place game.

Great Britain had an interesting start to the tournament, with a win by default in their first game due to Mexico not being present, then beating Canada ultimately making it to the championship game where they fell to the United States. Mexico however, won the games they played against Australia and Germany. Yet, Sweden did not manage to win any games nor score any points.

Eventually, it appears to be that this format involving more national teams competing is more beneficial for the tournament in terms of competitiveness and growth. For example, the dominant US were challenged the most during this tournament as their percentage of total points scored have declined, and their percentage of total points allowed increased. Thus, there is an increase and more even distribution of the percentage of total points among all the teams. Expectedly, if there were no complications with Mexico's canceled first game, the numbers would have differed as they already account for 16 percent of the total points scored with only two percent of the total points allowed. Also, the question remains which team would have played in the final game against the US if Mexico and Great Britain played their game.

Overall, the tournament continues to further establish the international competition in women's tackle football by including more teams and increased level of competition. The tournament provided a mix of dominant performances and close matchups, culminating in the United States

being crowned as the undefeated champions of the 2022 tournament for their fourth consecutive time.

From an outcome point of view, Finland won 2 out of their 3 games, which is a 66.7 percent win percentage like in 2010 and 2013. In the first game against Sweden, Finland won dominantly with a score of 49-0. In the second game against the United States, they lost with a score of 10-28, yet they had the lead in the first for Finland to score against the US, and for the first time for any team to be leading against the USA at any point in the game. In the third game against, Finland also for the first time narrowly won against Canada with a score of 19-17, which secured them a 3rd place finish in the tournament in front of their home crowds.

Overall, Finland had a successful outcome in the 2022 tournament, finishing in 3rd place and winning 2 out of their 3 games. Their only loss was against the United States, which is the top-ranked team in the world.

5.2 Women's World Championships Over Time

In this part of the chapter statistical analyses are performed on the WWC events over time to understand the situation of this international tournament. The chapter shows several accumulative data concerning the WWC and the participating teams over time. Additionally, over time analyses are performed on the national teams that participated in all the Women's World Championship events since its takeoff in 2010. Those national teams: the United States, Canada, and Finland have four WWC events participations, which provide a suitable common ground for comparison, reflection, and measurement of progress.

TABLE 9: WWC overtime national teams' analysis.

Team	Participations	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage
United states	4	12	0	100%
Canada	4	7	5	58%
Finland	4	7	5	58%
Germany	3	3	6	33%
Sweden	3	2	7	22%
Mexico	2	4	2	67%
Great Britain	2	3	3	50%
Australia	2	1	5	17%
Austria	1	0	3	0%
Spain	1	0	3	0%

National teams Wins and Losses

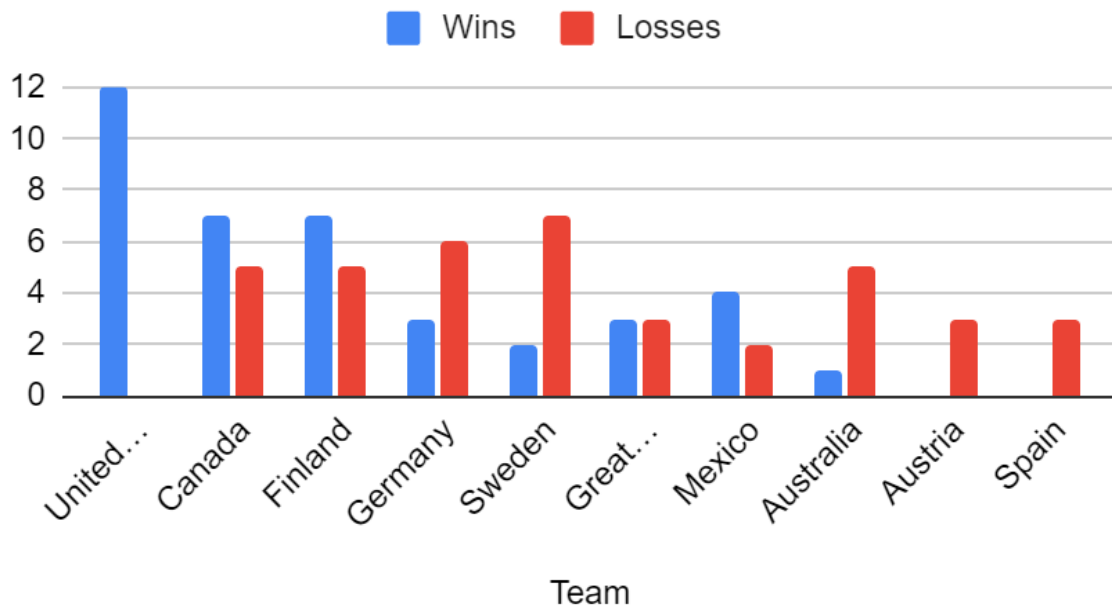


FIGURE 2. National teams wins and losses over time comparison in the IFAF WWC.

TABLE 10: WWC, USA, Canada, and Finland over time analysis for points.

WWC Year	Points scored	Points allowed	Percentage of total points scored	Percentage of total points allowed
2010	413	413	24%	24%
2013	547	547	32%	32%
2017	357	357	21%	21%
2022	395	395	23%	23%
WWC Total	1712	1712		
WWC Average	428	428		
WWC Median	404	404		
USA Total	707	47	41%	3%
Canada Total	261	252	15%	15%
Finland Total	289	279	17%	16%

WWC Total Points Trend

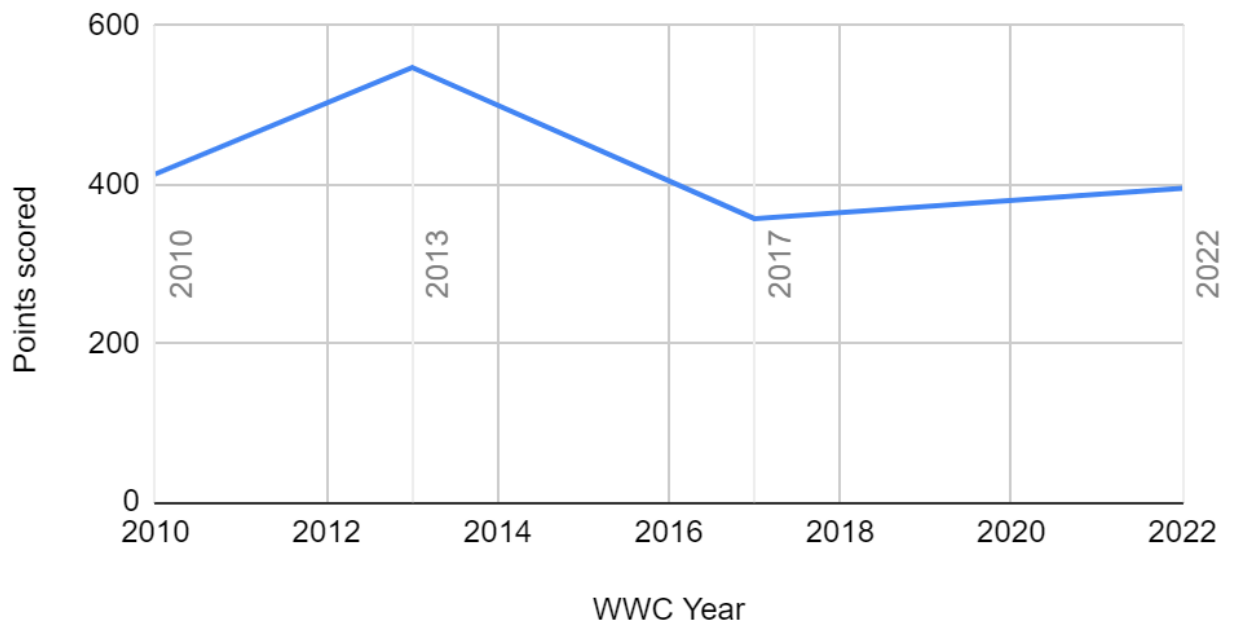


FIGURE 3. Points trend for the IFAF WWC through the 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2022 tournaments.

The Women's World Championship has played a significant role in expanding the global network for women American football athletes. Excluding the games that involved the USA, the teams in the first Women's World Championship were fairly matched, with an average margin of victory of just 12 points (Crawford, 2022). However, in comparison to the 2010 tournament, the 2013 games did not have the same level of competitiveness (Crawford, 2022). Because the point difference, with the exclusion of USA games, significantly increased from 12 points to 32.5 points, yet the point differential reduced to 22 points in the 2017 games, which is supported by the tables in this chapter and Crawford (2022). The US national team has been the outlier on the positive side in the points and wins metrics, and the teams with least or no wins in each WWC tournament has been the outlier on the negative side of the same metrics. Interestingly, only in 2013 the total points scored/allowed were above the average, and it would be 2010 and 2013 if reflected on based on the median. Which could indicate that competition is getting closer, considering the total points were highest in the first two editions of the championship. Moreover, the percentage of the US points scored has been decreasing over time. The 2013 tournament recorded the highest points to date in a two-group format. Finland and Canada are in the second tier of winning percentage, with Finland having its worst performance playing in Canada, and Canada having its worst performance playing in Finland. Additionally, in the 2022 WWC alone the US national conceded 51 percent of the total points scored against them in all four tournaments. While the Canadian national team showed improvement from 2010 to 2017 showing decrease in their loss margin against the USA from 66 points to 25 points (Crawford, 2022).

5.2.1 Finnish National Team Analysis Over Time

Finland has participated in all the four WWC events, and that's a success only achieved by the United States and Canada. Which is also a sign of their commitment to women's football, its progression, and their legacy. Additionally, Finland being the only nation to host the event twice is another sign of their expertise, resources, and quality of production for football events and its management. Moreover, the Finnish national team is having a good showcase during the events as the numbers suggest, winning seven games overall and losing five providing a winning record. Only in 2017 where they lost more than 1 game, and they came back after that by winning gold in the 2019 European championships and taking 3rd place in WWC 2022 beating Canada the usual silver medalist. Thus, Finland has a 100 percent win record when playing in placement games.

The table below demonstrates the Finnish national team's performance according to the criteria shown in the table for all their WWC appearances. Then, the table is followed by analysis and graphical demonstration as well.

TABLE 11: Finland results over time analysis.

Year	W - Record	L - Record	Win %	Points For	Points Allowed	Points Differential
2010	2	1	67%	76	106	-30
2013	2	1	67%	79	53	26
2017	1	2	33%	56	75	-19
2022	2	1	67%	78	45	33
Total	7	5	58%	289	279	10
Average			58%	72.25	69.75	2.5

By analyzing the Finnish women's national team performance in the championship games from 2010 to 2022, we can perform some analysis to expand on the national team's performance data.

In the 2010 championship, Finland won two games in total and lost a game. In the group stage, Finland won against Austria with a score of 50-16, but lost to the United States with a score of 0-72. However, Finland qualified for the 3rd place placement game that they won against Germany with a score of 26-18. During the tournament, Finland scored a total of 76 points, and allowed a total of 106 points with a point differential of -30.

In the 2013 championship, Finland won two games in total and lost a game. In the group stage, Finland won their game against Spain with a score of 47-0 and lost their game against Canada with a score of 12-34. Yet, they were able to qualify to the 3rd place determinant game where they narrowly won against Germany with a score of 20-19. During the tournament, Finland scored a total of 79 points, and allowed a total of 53 points with a point differential of +26.

In the 2017 championship, Finland won one game against Australia, lost to Great Britain and the United States, and finished in 5th place. They scored a total of 56 points and allowed 75, resulting in a point differential of -19.

In the 2022 championship, Finland won two games against Sweden and Canada, and lost to the United States. They scored a total of 78 points and allowed 45, resulting in a point differential of +33.

Based on these results, we can see that Finland's performance is on the winning side in four tournament appearances and 12 games played. Thus, the Finnish national team has seven wins scoring 289 points with an average of 72.25, allowing 279 points with an average of 69.25, and resulting in a positive balance in their point differential of 10 points and an average of 2.5. Their best years can be considered in 2013 and 2022, where they won multiple games and had a positive point differential as well as securing third place. In 2017, they struggled as they only won one game and had a negative point differential. Also, in 2010, 2013, and 2022 they had a 2-1 win-loss record giving them 67 percent winning percentage. Their only loss in the years 2010, 2013, 2022 was against the United States who are the champions in all of the events and are the number 1 ranked team in the world. However, in their only losing participation with 1-2 record in 2017 they lost against Great Britain and the United States.

Overall, it's fair to say that the Finnish national team's performance in this event is steady. The results are on the positive side with a total of 7 wins and 5 losses in their four championship

participations giving a win percentage of 58.3. Finally, by observing the points trend in the above figure it appears to be in a promising direction.

Finnish national team points trend

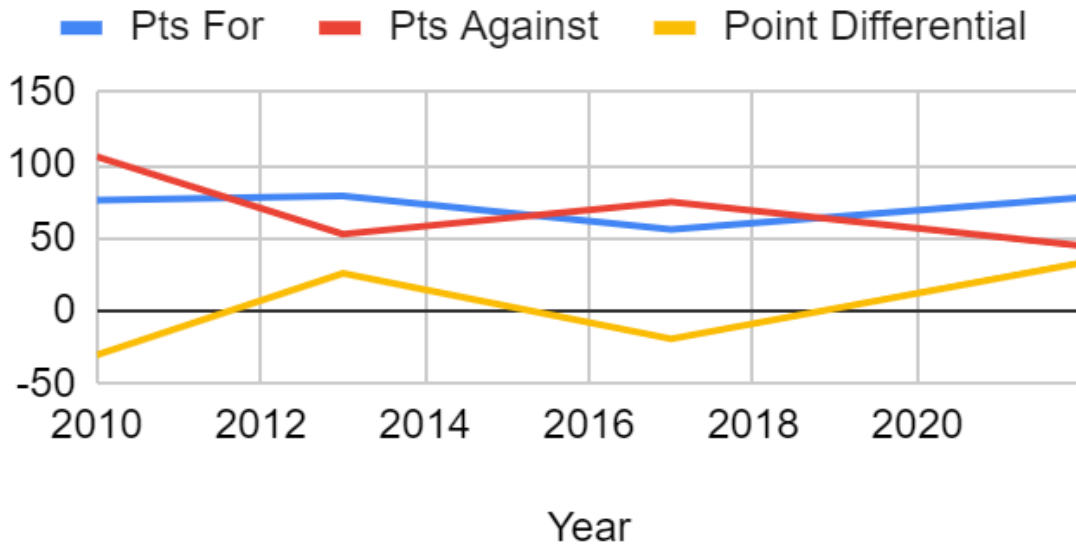


FIGURE 4. The Finnish national team's all points trend through the 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2022 IFAF WWC tournaments.

5.2.2 United States National Team Analysis Over Time

The USA is the winningest women's national team in the world. This achievement is established in a dominant fashion as the US women's national team has never been beaten in the Women's World Championships. The following table and figure demonstrate the numbers behind the dominant performances by the US national team according to the criteria shown in the table for all their WWC appearances. Then, the table is followed by analysis and graphical demonstration.

TABLE 12: USA results over time analysis.

Year	W - Record	L - Record	Win %	Points For	Points Allowed	Points Differential
2010	3	0	100%	201	0	201
2013	3	0	100%	255	7	248
2017	3	0	100%	118	16	102
2022	3	0	100%	133	24	109
Total	12	0	100%	707	47	660
Average			100%	176.75	11.75	165

By analyzing the US women's national team's performance in the championship games from 2010 to 2022, we can perform some analysis to expand on the national team's results data.

In the 2010 championship, USA won all their games in an extremely dominant fashion. In the group stage, the US national team scored a total of 135 points in two games while allowing 0 points. They scored a total of 201 points and allowed a total of 0 points with a point differential of +201.

In the 2013 championship, USA again won all their games in another extremely dominant style. In the group stage, the US won their game against Sweden with a score of 84-0 and won their game against Germany with a score of 107-07, scoring 191 points and only allowing 7 in two games.

During the tournament, in three games the US scored a total of 255 points, and only allowed 7 points with a point differential of +248.

In the 2017 championship, USA again won all their games securing themselves their third title in a row. In their first two games, they scored a total of 77 points and allowed 0, which was their lowest points scored in their first two games at that point. Eventually, they proceeded to secure the title against Canada, the host team in the final with a score of 41-16. Which was the first time for the US to allow more than 7 points in a game.

In the 2022 championship, the US for their fourth straight time won the title. In their first two games, they won against Germany with a score of 63-0, followed by their win against Finland, a tough host team with a score of 28-10. In the USA's game against Finland, for the first time a team had the lead against the US, at least until half time. Starting the second half, Finland was ahead with a 10-7 score. However, the US secured the win in the second half by stopping Finland from scoring any points, and by scoring 21 more points. The US national team then proceeds to win the title, but for the first time against Great Britain and not Canada. The game involved the two sides scoring in an entertaining match up, and eventually ending with a score of 42-14.

Based on these results, it is obvious that the US national team's performance is on another level. In four tournament appearances and 12 games played the US national team has 12 wins scoring 707 points with an average of 176.75, allowing only 47 points with an average of 11.75, eventually resulting in a positive balance in their point differential of 660 points with an average of 165.

The highest scoring years for the US national team were 2010 and 2013 as they scored a total of 456 points, and this accounts for 64.5 percent of their total points scored in their four championship titles wins. Those same years are also their least allowed points of only 7 points. In 2017, the US national team scored the least points in three games of only 118 points and allowed their second highest points of 16 points resulting in their least point differential of 102 points.

In the following WWC tournament in 2022, the US national team had the most challenge in their international appearances. First, Finland led against the USA in the first half of the game, a feat that was achieved for the first time against the USA. Second, for the first time another team in the same tournament also managed to score against the US, making it that in two out of three games teams scored against the US national team.

US national team points trend

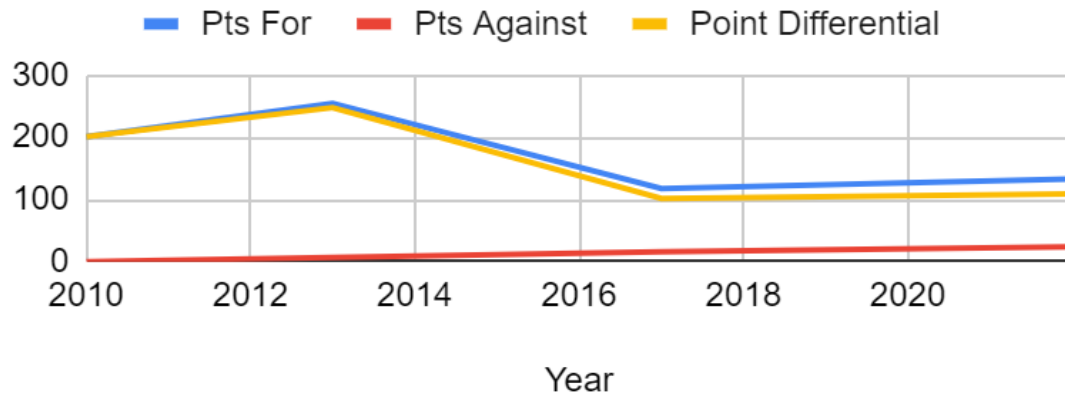


FIGURE 5. The US national team's all points trend through the 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2022 IFAF WWC tournaments

Furthermore, a trend is observed in the points scored by the US national team, which is decreasing over time. Whereas the points allowed have increased over time resulting in a lower points difference. Accordingly, it shows improvement in international women's American football, and a trend of decreasing the gap in the level of performance with the US national team.

Also, there can be another trending emphasis on the previous point by looking at the points trend for the only national teams to have the same number of WWC participations as the US national team, namely Finland and Canada. For Finland it has been somewhat consistent in their points scored, but their points allowed have been in a decreasing trend. As for Canada, their points scored have been inconsistent, yet their points allowed have been in a decreasing trend.

In conclusion, the discussed points trends suggest that the competition has improved on the international scene and steadily improving against the ultimate competition against the US national team.

On the other hand, this data might not be as meaningful for the US national team as it might be for the other national teams, because they obviously have been a brutally dominant team in international women's American football. On the other hand, this data can be more meaningful for European women's football in terms of progress, and for international women's American football in general in terms of closing the competition gap making it more competitive and more entertaining, hence providing a more sustainable atmosphere.

Overall, it is obvious that the US women's national team is the most dominant national team on the international level of competition, and it is everyone else trying to catch up. The result of four participations of the US national team in four IFAF WWC tournaments is four consecutive titles. Which is demonstrated by 12 wins, 0 losses, 707 points scored, only 47 points allowed, and +606 point differential. The US Women's national team has "Gold standard" as their slogan on social media for a reason. Finally, this table gives an insight into the team's performance over the years, and analyzing the data in different ways can give a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

5.2.3 Canadian National Team Analysis Over Time

The Canadian national team has participated in all four competitions of the Women's World Championship along with the US and the Finnish national teams. Canada has won three silver medals in their four WWC appearances. The following tables shows the team's performance according to the criteria shown in the table for all their WWC appearances. Then, the table is followed by analysis and graphical demonstration.

TABLE 13: Canada results over time analysis.

Year	W - Record	L - Record	Win %	Points For	Points Allowed	Points Differential
2010	2	1	66.67%	32	84	-52
2013	2	1	66.67%	84	76	8
2017	2	1	66.67%	82	47	35
2022	1	2	33.33%	63	45	18
Total	7	5	58%	261	252	9
Average			58.33%	65.25	63	2.25

By analyzing the Canadian women's national team results in the championship games from 2010 to 2022, we can perform some analysis to expand on the national team's results data.

In the 2010 championship, Canada won 2 games in total and only lost in the championship game. In the group stage, Canada won against Sweden with a score of 12-6, and won against Germany with a score of 20-12. Then, Canada qualified for the championship game that they lost against the USA with a score of 0-66. During the tournament, Canada scored a total of 32 points, and allowed a total of 84 points with a point differential of -52.

In the 2013 championship, Canada again won 2 games in total and only lost in the championship game. In the group stage, Canada won against Spain with a score of 50-0, and won against Finland

with a score of 34-12. Therefore, the Canadian national team was able to qualify to the championship game where they lost to the US national team with a score of 64-0. During the tournament, Canada scored a total of 84 points, and allowed a total of 76 points with a point differential of +8.

In the 2017 championship, Canada was the host country for the third IFAF WWC tournament. The Canadian national team won their first game against Australia convincingly with a score of 31-6 and won their second game against Great Britain with an even bigger score of 35-0. At home, Canada faced the US in the championship game and managed to score 16 points, but eventually lost the game with a score of 16-41. Nonetheless, the 16 points Canada scored remain the most ever against the US national team. The Canadian national team possibly had their best performance among their home crowd scoring 82 points, allowing 47 points, and a point differential of +35 points, which is their best to this date.

In the 2022 championship, Canada had their least wins, only winning one and losing two of their games. In the beginning, Canada won against Australia with a score of 33-6, then lost to Great Britain with a score of 20-13. Which was a disappointment for the Canadian national team as that meant for the first time Canada will not be playing in the championship game and it was Great Britain facing the US. To be followed by another loss against Finland - the host team - in last minute turn of events with a score of 17-19. The 2022 championship marks the first losing record for the Canadian national team scoring 63 points, allowing for 45 points, and a point differential of +18.

Based on these performances, we can see that the Canadian national team performance is on the winning side in four tournament appearances and 12 games played. The Canadian national team has 7 wins scoring 261 points with an average of 65.25, allowing 252 points with an average of 63 resulting in a positive balance in their point differential of +9 points and an average of 2.25.

In 2010, 2013, and 2017 Canada was in the final game playing against the US, even though Canada lost these matchups, but they were the silver medalists as the second best in the world. However, in 2022 the Canadian national team suffered their first losing tournament, only winning one of their three games, and not claiming any medals as they lost to a strong host Finnish team in their bronze medal matchup. On the other hand, in the 2022 WWC tournament the Canadian national team had the least total allowed points, and their second-best point differential in their record until that point.

Of the three national teams that participated in the 4 editions of the IFAF WWC events, Canada and Finland are competing against each other in the points criteria. However, Canada has three silver medals and played in three consecutive final games, yet Finland only has bronze medals and never played in the final game. Both teams have the same win - loss record of 7 wins and 5 losses.

Overall, it is clear that the Canadian national team is highly competitive, and they present their success in three consecutive silver medals. The outcome of their performance is on the positive side with a total of seven wins and five losses in the four-championship participation giving a win percentage of 58.3. Also, their total points scored is 261, and their total points allowed is 252, resulting in a positive points differential of +9. In conclusion, this table gives an insight into the team's results over the years, and analyzing the data in different ways can give a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

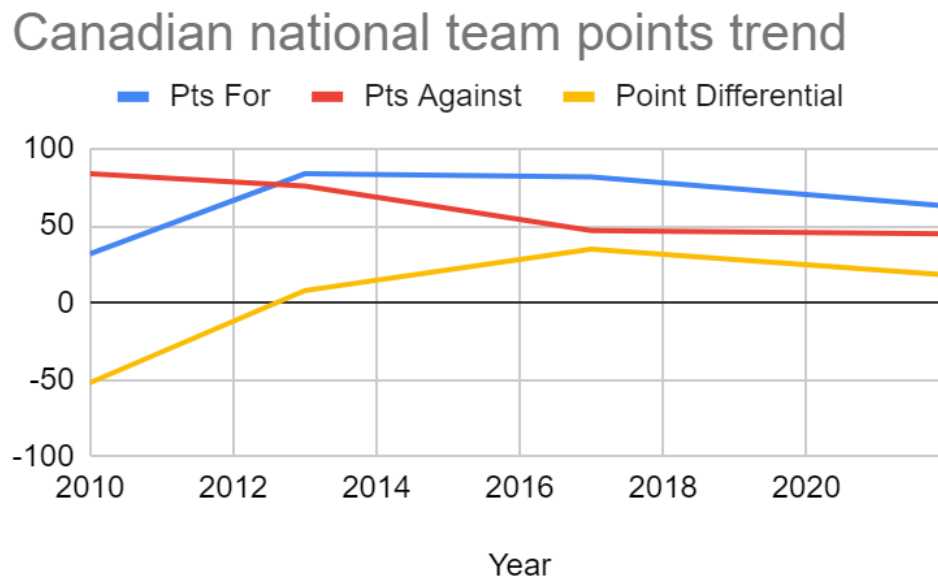


FIGURE 6. The Canadian national team's all points trend through the 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2022 IFAF WWC tournaments

6 DYNAMICS OF WOMEN'S AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Proceeding to explore the sport of women's American football several challenges and opportunities arise within the realm of this sport. In this section a set of themes and functions have been identified under globalization and sport management in women's American football. The below chart maps out the findings from the four conducted interviews according to the literature concepts of the study.

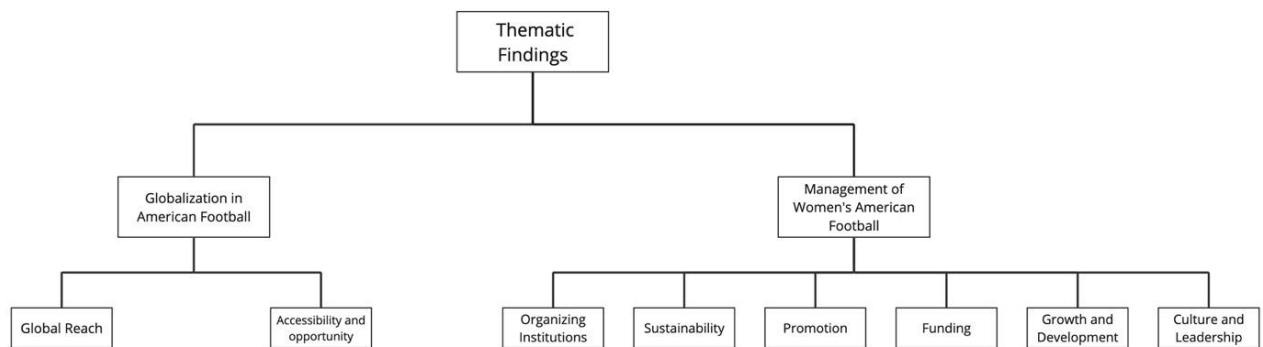


FIGURE 7. The thematic findings from the four conducted interviews are distributed under the theoretical concepts in the literature of the study of Globalization in Sport and Sport management.

6.1 Globalization

In this part of the chapter the findings from the interviews concerning globalization are explained in different layers according to the interviewees' point of views.

6.1.1 Global Reach

The transfer of American football to Europe began in the last century. For example, countries like Germany and Britain were introduced to the sport through the American military presence after World War II and during the Cold War explain interviewee A1. Later, in the 1990s the NFL created its European product called NFL Europe. However, it was challenging to enter a big market like France due to the protective reactions from rugby and soccer sports personnel over their fields. Additionally, it is hard for American football to fit in local sport cultures where soccer is already their popular sport. Therefore eventually, the NFL decided to stop investing more money into the NFL Europe league.

Fast forward to the present, the NFL has regular season games played in Europe, with multiple games played in the UK which has a large following. Another notable NFL game was played in Frankfurt, Germany during the 2022 regular season, which gathered significant interest by approximately two million people applying for 46,000 seats to attend that game. This game demonstrated the huge popularity of the NFL and American football in Germany.

6.1.2 Accessibility and Opportunity

Moreover, movies involving American football create interest towards the sport for various people around the world. Paired with the internet it has become significantly easier than prior the internet era to follow American football around the world. Following the sport in the US has become easier and more accessible with the internet, but there is a lot more to the connectivity and accessibility provided by the internet and technology. For example, as interviewee F1 mentions "The internet has made football accessible to people all around the world, providing opportunities to learn and coach the game". F1 also adds "Quality coaching resources are available through organizations like USA Football". Hence, accessibility to coaching and other resources have directly improved

both knowledge and safety in American football globally. Additionally, American football software like Hudl allows coaches and players to review and share feedback on filmed games or practices.

Globalization through technology demonstrated by the internet with its various functions have made it possible for players to be scouted and recruited through online platforms and social media. As pointed out by A1 “Facebook has been a key platform for expanding the reach of women's football and connecting players from different countries”. Also, young players are provided with a better opportunity to showcase their abilities and to be scouted. Overall, technology has clearly facilitated finding information, observing different teams and players, and connecting people around American football, especially for niche markets like women's football.

Furthermore, various opportunities are generated through creating connections between associations, teams, coaches, and players forming a global football community. Hence, knowledge and skill transfer are facilitated, as seen in different forms. As interviewee A1 noted “The Women's World Games in New Orleans has helped to connect women football players from around the world and grow the sport”, also interviewee A1 mentioned that “resuming the Women's World Games sponsored by USA Football would be beneficial for European women to find opportunities to play in the US”. Besides, interviewee F1 noted “Globalization has given more opportunities for individuals involved in football to move around the world”. This is observed when players from different countries are playing for local club teams, a phenomenon that is commonly utilized when a team needs to fill a gap for a certain position or skill set as seen in Finland and other European countries. Nevertheless, there are women of various nationalities from Europe and other countries like Australia and Mexico playing in the United States. Additionally, if American football continues to grow globally, it may present more opportunities for players from various countries to succeed professionally. For example, the NFL has taken the initiative to encourage international participation in American football by launching the International Player Development program.

Furthermore, flag football may also become an Olympic sport in the future, overall, further raising the sport's profile. Also, the IFAF Women's World Championship has been steadily expanding with the primary objective of making tackle football a part of the Olympics. Coherently, this

championship serves as a platform for women to showcase their talents on an international level. Overall, the globalization of women's football has brought significant attention to the sport, making it clear that women can play tackle football too. However, the consistent dominance of the US women's team has raised concerns that the Olympics may not want to award the US with yet another gold medal.

Currently, around 48,000 women over the age of 18 participate in organized tackle football in the US, while approximately 235,000 women over the age of 18 play flag football as mentioned by interviewee A2. However, while the sport is gaining popularity, the documentation of the history of women's football remains underdeveloped and requires more attention.

However, in recent years, there has been a change in the rules for American football in Finland. As in 2016, the regulations were updated, allowing American players to join Finnish teams. This move affected the sport in Finland, as it opened doors for players from other European countries to join in later years.

Interviewee F2 explains that international competitions such as the World Championships and European Championships have also helped the sport grow, giving athletes a chance to compete at the highest level and view themselves as serious contenders in the sport. Additionally, this visibility in international competitions helps to promote the sport's legitimacy. Also, the media coverage of Finnish football further highlights its significance. Overall, national and international football events and competitions play a crucial role in enabling players to compare themselves with others and push their limits to improve their game.

On the other hand, social media has been a positive and negative influence on American football. As pointed out by F1, while it has increased the sport's visibility, it can also make it seem more significant than it is, leading to possible misunderstandings. F1 also added that to expand American football's reach in Finland, it's crucial to develop the sport in more cities beyond Helsinki.

6.2 Management of Women's American Football

In this part of the chapter the findings from the interviews concerning the management aspects in women's American football are explained according to the interviewees' point of views.

6.2.1 Organizing Institutions

American football is organized differently between the USA and European countries. In the US women's American football is organized under two different organizations where each has their own league, making it a league format. Where in European countries there are American football federations/ associations that regulate the sport. That said, it is seen that European countries are successfully organizing American football with their federations. Additionally, they have sport ministries that promote and regulate sports, and essentially keep costs down. Also, the existence of sport federations in European countries play a significant role in organizing events and supporting teams and players. Additionally, F1 points out that Finland has a good reputation in regard to organizing events as they have the experience and manpower to host sports events, which gives them a competitive advantage. For example, Finland has organized the 2013 IFAF Women's World Championship and the 2018 European Championship.

6.2.2 Sustainability

Women's American football experiences a challenging issue of relatively high rate of turnover in teams and players mainly due to changes in financial and personal situations. In the case of the women's national team, it is challenging to maintain the level of the team because of short careers and family responsibilities of the players, as pointed out by F2. F2 continues to elaborate that after big football tournaments comes a high turnover of players, which results in the challenge of finding new players to fill the gap created by retired players.

In addition, volunteers have limited time and resources to offer as they have their daily jobs and other commitments. Hence, F1 puts emphasis on keeping players engaged in the sport for longer periods, as this will increase the number of players and the sport's longevity. Additionally, F1

continues to explain that providing youth programs and facilities paired with a clear pathway for young athletes could be encouraging for more players participation and engagement in the sport. Moreover, building consistency and providing for events organization can be addressed by having full time workers within American football clubs as explained by F1. At the same time, engaging more sponsors and volunteers will come to the support of American football in Finland.

6.2.3 Promotion

European nations have ministries of sport that support and promote sports. According to A1, these agencies often work to keep costs down, making it easier for individuals and organizations to participate in sports.

F2 and A2 mentioned that the players take on the role of promoting the sport through their social media accounts, as there is limited funding for advertising provided for women's American football. Also, according to F2 the federation provides news articles, but the players are the ones driving promotion efforts. Some players have even secured their own sponsorships by promoting companies on social media. Additionally, word of mouth plays a significant role in attracting new players to the sport.

6.2.4 Funding

In Finland the government's promotion and funding of sports is vital, and it has been essential in keeping the costs down and making sports accessible to more people. However, when it comes to women's football, the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) has not provided significant support in terms of funding or promotion. This lack of support has made it more difficult for women's football to grow and develop in Finland.

Interviewees A1, F2, and A2 agreed that the cost of participating in American football activities has been on the rise over the years, making it difficult for players to bear the expenses. Such activities are presented in local American football seasons, international tournaments with national teams, and football camps. Some players express interest in participating in tournaments but cannot

afford the expenses. In 2017 for example, for Finnish players the cost of participating in the IFAF WWC tournament in Canada was almost \$3,000, and many players couldn't afford that, thus the Finnish team performance was not good that year. Also, in the United States players pay to play and the cost can range from \$500 to over \$1000 per season. Furthermore, for the most part, women who play football in Europe are not paid, and it is possible that the men's game is more financially viable.

On the other hand, interviewee F1 mentioned that tournaments could be an effective way to generate revenue and invest in youth coaching as investing in charismatic coaches can be better than investing in bringing foreign players. As the tournament gains recognition and improves, it could attract more sponsor money and larger crowds, leading to a significant increase in revenue. However, there is a need for more resources to develop the sport in terms of funding and sponsorship. To ensure consistency in organizing events, paid full-time workers should be considered. It is also important to emphasize getting sponsors and volunteers to support football in Finland.

Furthermore, the lack of funding for Finnish women's football leads to limited resources for the sport. Women's sports often have fewer resources than men's sports and are not paid equally, and Finnish law prohibits players from using crowdfunding platforms like GoFundMe. To compensate for the lack of funding, some players have taken the initiative to collaborate with companies willing to support their football journeys for the WWC event. To do so, those players create their own channel of support by showing those companies on social media as supporting them and for the companies it is something like charity. However, individual sponsors are not allowed for the Finnish national team, highlighting the need for more support from sponsors and resources to develop the sport.

F1 goes on to mention that amateur football is currently facing financial challenges that prevent it from undergoing structural changes similar to rugby. Rugby has established a championship that has managed to attract significant funding.

A2 also added that there is concern about flag football, which is that travel teams can be costly, which limits the opportunities available to some players. Due to the cost, some players are unable to participate, which can affect their overall development and limit the sport's growth.

6.2.5 Growth and Development

According to A1 the goal of getting American football in the Olympics is the driver for the growth of the IFAF Women's World Championship. Additionally, F1 adds that the increase in crowds since 2013 is a positive sign for the growth and development of the tournament. As more people become aware of the sport and the tournament, it can attract more sponsor money and larger crowds, which would result in a meaningful growth in revenue. increase in revenue.

Meanwhile, the inclusion of flag football in high schools for girls in eight states in the US is a sign of its growing popularity. Additionally, A2 mentioned that flag football had been identified as one of the top five fastest-growing sports for females at the high school level. A2 also says "The growth and more importantly the sustainability of the women's game lies in flag football, not tackle football". Besides, flag football is anticipated to be added to the Los Angeles 2028 summer Olympic games.

6.2.6 Culture and Leadership

It is believed that the culture of American football in Finland can benefit from a change in order to stay attractive for both athletes and fans. A2 and F1 agree on the importance of understanding that the skill level of coaches significantly influences the performance of players. Hence, investing in coaching development programs and training for coaches can improve the quality of coaching and the performance of the players as stated by F1.

Additionally, F2 added that club teams should be encouraged to work together and find pain points and challenges to increase the popularity of the sport is a key step in fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork in the sport. This requires strong leadership and facilitation of discussions to ensure that everyone is working towards a common goal. For example, leaders in

American football in Finland can share best practices and work towards developing the sport together by sharing ideas and experiences.

Also, improving facilities and game fields in the Helsinki area can be achieved by encouraging teams to cooperate and influence the City of Helsinki. Overcoming competition between teams and encouraging cooperation towards a common goal is critical to the success of the sport and requires strong leadership and a culture that values collaboration over individual achievement.

Furthermore, while the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) has made efforts to support and promote women's football, there is a need for more female representation in leadership roles. In the NFL for example, under the leadership of Samantha Rapoport a pathway for careers in football for women has been facilitated.

Moreover, A2 stated that coaches should have an understanding of how to train women. Coaches should go through training on how to effectively communicate with women and educate themselves on how to have more effective relationships and interactions with their players.

When asked about effective leadership and management, A2 asserted that effective leadership is vital for a successful football team, and that effective leaders should have experience in leadership roles, professionalism, and a good track record. Also, effective management practices include a business plan, good people skills, and an understanding of how to effectively coach women. Besides, the tone and culture of a team is set by people in leadership roles. As F1 said “American Coach Rooney emphasizes the importance of culture in football and says that if we don't design our culture, someone else will.”

In addition, it is significantly important to have the opportunity of learning life skills through playing sports, such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. Besides, ethical decisions should be made in sports, with an emphasis on sportsmanship over gamesmanship. Leaders in sports should prioritize teaching young people how to make ethical decisions and be their best selves. This can contribute to creating a positive culture and promoting sportsmanship in football.

7 DISCUSSION

This chapter encompasses the analysis of the findings from the interviews and the analysis of the IFAF WWC competitions discussed in the previous chapters. Additionally, the theoretical contributions encompass the conceptual discussion in relation to the literature.

7.1 Discussion of the Findings

This research has adopted globalization in sports and sport management as the literary resources to explore and discuss the multiple layers of the women's American football environment. Besides, the chosen research methodology was seen as appropriate to address the research questions. Accordingly, data and information collection were performed from various academic and nonacademic sources to capture the scene of women's American football. Additionally, analytical breakdown to the competition results on the biggest stage of international women's American football in the IFAF WWC provides factual context about the environment of international competition. Also, the implementation of the research through semi structured interviews with contributors involved in women's American football is necessary to provide valuable insight and details about the matters in research.

Globalization in sports provides several indicators in an attempt to explain the similarities and differences to various elements involved in American football. Utilizing Lee and Kim's (2016) explanation of the birth of sports in connection with their respective nations and cultures can facilitate understanding the different implementations of sports when transferred to different parts of the world, or even different parts of a country. The implementation of American football in the various layers of the sport is observed in different parts of the world according to their legal and governmental systems, their local cultures, and the demand for the sport. Hence, employing the concept of glocalization referred to by (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007; Szerovay et al, 2015; Robertson & Buhari-Gulmez, 2016) appears to be effective in understanding the American football environments for researchers, and in leading the sport for sports managers.

Contextual illustration can be provided by looking at the Finnish sport system as both the public sports sector and the voluntary sports sector work hand in hand based on the first Sports Act in

1980 (Laine & Vehmas, 2017). While the American sports system is largely driven by market forces, with teams, leagues, and organizations are privately owned and competing for revenue and fan engagement. Furthermore, in the US American football is heavily predominant by male athletes having their football journey being emphasized during their high school years according to statistics conducted in 2019 (Statista, 2019). Also, according to The Aspen Institute (2020) girls have shown more interest in sports like Baseball, basketball, and bicycling. Nonetheless, girls and boys can join the flag football teams together, starting the age of 6 and till they're 18, after the collaboration between the NFL and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America (NFL, 2018). Whereas in Finland, the American Football Association of Finland (SAJL) provides and regulates multiple divisions of American football for both men and women. There is the women's Maple league division, which is the highest level of football in Finland, and there are division I, division II, and flag football.

Globalization in American football expands the sport's reach, accessibility, and opportunities on a global scale. This includes not only the sport itself, but also the knowledge and skills required, the prominence of the NFL, the radiance of the Super Bowl, the collegiate football environment, and other foundational aspects. However, other elements of the sport such as: athlete recruitment, retention, and development, marketing, sponsorship, promotion, sustainability, and funding are locally adjusted rather than globally imported. Nonetheless, the main supplier of American football, its related aspects, and providers of the biggest levels of competition whether nationally or internationally is the USA.

This study provides context to women's American football around the globe as part of the bigger world of American football. According to Houlihan (2003) internationalization is a feature of globalization, referring to the increased interconnectedness and integration of countries and regions in the world. This includes the flow of goods, services, people, and information across national borders. Also, according to Houlihan (2003) deterritorialization is another feature of globalization; referring to the emergence of transnational actors and networks that operate across national borders. This includes the rise of global corporations, NGOs, and social movements that could challenge the authority of nation-states. Accordingly, the International Federation of American football plays an important role in the world of American football by providing and regulating different

international competitions and connecting countries from all over the world involved in American football.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter of this research, USA Football, and Hudl software are providing tremendous value to the world of American football cross border. For example, as mentioned by F1 that USA Football and other resources have provided for the improvement of knowledge and safety in football. Also, F2 mentioned that the Hudl software has brought tremendous value to football coaching and football film exchange in the Finnish football community. Such statements can be an indicator of another feature of globalization referred to by Houlihan (2003) as westernization; the dominance of western culture and values in shaping global trends and practices. This includes the spread of Western brands, media, and lifestyles, as well as the diffusion of Western ideas and ideologies. American movies involving American football also drew worldwide attention to the sport. Additionally, the internet, which is another demonstrator and diffuser of western culture, have facilitated further spread of American football. As A1 mentioned, Facebook has played an important role in expanding the reach of women's football, and the connectivity between female athletes across the globe. Various technologies bring significant value in the transfer and implementation of football activities.

Moreover, globalization has provided opportunities to the different stakeholders involved in the sport of American football worldwide. For example, coaches and players can take their knowledge and skills across borders to participate in American football activities. F1 asserted that the value a "charismatic" coach brings can be tremendous especially to young players. Additionally, F2 mentioned the ability of local Finnish clubs to bring players from the US and European countries due to change in domestic rules.

In addition, globalization has also increased awareness towards women's tackle football, and providing an international platform for competition at the WWC has provided legitimacy for the small sport, and purpose for the athletes. Despite an often referred to as unclear pathway in American football, which can be discouraging to potential athletes, bigger international competitions can be an attraction for potential athletes. However, the costs of the game can actually

be a limitation to many athletes, as F2 mentioned that the cost of being on the Finnish national team for some players can prevent players from participation.

In the management of American football, the interviewees expressed their ideas from different aspects involved in the operation of American football. Their ideas rose relatively from the ground up, at least in the demonstration of these findings in the previous chapter we put it in such order. Understandably, all those findings are connected as elements of sport management in many ways as parts of the whole process of management. It is understood that American football is organized differently between the USA and Finland.

Furthermore, the challenges expressed by the different interviewees can be divided into several key areas. First, sport development which as referred to by Green (2005) relates to optimizing athlete recruitment, retention, and development. Those issues or rather phases of building American football programs are forming challenges due to several issues. F1 and F2 expressed that because of the reliance on volunteers in the Finnish American football environment, comes the limited resources aspect of those volunteers and their ability to meet all the needs for the sport and sport programs to develop. Laine and Vehmas (2017) explain the Finnish sports system and culture operates and depends mainly on volunteers. This matter branches onto all the elements mentioned in the findings chapter. However, volunteers bring tremendous free to low-cost value to the whole environment of American football that already faces financial challenges on multiple levels. The Volunteers take roles on the whole spectrum of an American football organization whether as active or inactive players. Therefore, the retention and development referred to by Green (2005) in the sport development process is enhanced by voluntary roles which can be taken in coaching, or operations and management roles. Even F1 asserts that volunteers are highly valuable in the American football environment, and as he suggests that pairing the voluntary efforts with full time workers can further enhance the performance and development of American football organizations. For example, F2 explained that most of the promotion and advertising efforts are done by the athletes through word of mouth, and I can personally confirm that, even A2 explained the same about women's football in the US. Hence, equipping this already existing channel with the work of full-time employees can enhance the outcome of recruitment efforts for potential football players, and fan engagement efforts. Additionally, these efforts can be further directed to bring

“new” fans and player prospects. By using the term “new”, for fans for example, it is meant other than the already existing fans, who mostly are players' friends and family already. F1 even mentioned that many of the required tasks in football events, for example, can be achieved through reaching out to friends and family. Which understandably helps, but also does not allow for rather sustainable progress.

According to IFAF (2023e), Jenkkifutis (2023b) and further mentioned in the interviews by A1, and A2, the goal of reaching the Olympics is providing tremendous direction for football activities on the local and international level. For example, flag football is expected to be added in the 2028 summer Olympics, though there is no official announcement by the IOC. However, the consensus is that Flag football will be included in the Los Angeles Olympic games, according to F2. Also, according to Jenkkifutis (2023f) “The big dream of the international flag football community is to bring the sport to the Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028”. The location of the games in the USA and the strong support of the wealthy billion-dollar NFL make IFAF's dream possible. The International Olympic Committee will make the sport’s selection for the Los Angeles Games in the fall of 2023.” (Jenkkifutis 2023f).

Additionally, in August 2024, Finland will host the Flag Football World Championships, which is deemed as the most significant event before the Olympics (Jenkkifutis, 2023f). Lahti and Pajulahti Sports Center in Finland will host the games that will determine the medalists of the World Championship, while also playing a crucial role in determining the ranking positions for the Olympics (Jenkkifutis, 2023f). That year's World Championships in Finland is anticipated to be the largest sports event ever held by IFAF (Jenkkifutis, 2023f).

Accordingly, Finland is a proven great host for American football events, successfully hosting the Women’s World Championships twice in 2013 and 2022 and is planned to host the 2024 Flag Football Championships. F1 explains that Finland has a good reputation in organizing sport events having the experience and human resources giving them an advantage. Also, in Finland, American football operations have been running locally for a long time. Hence, the support for women’s American football in Finland was and is feasible since the infrastructure was already available and the football operations have been running already.

Furthermore, location appears to influence teams, check table 6 of WWC 2017; the furthest teams from the tournament's location were the least performing compared to the dominant US team, the Canadian team playing at home, and Mexico that is a lot closer than European teams. Also, F2 confirms that many of the players selected initially on the Finnish national team that year were unable to afford the tournament costs. Additionally, Finland achieved 3 bronze medals when playing at home or in Europe, like in WWC 2010 in Sweden. Also, in the 2022 WWC event Mexico could not arrive on time for their first game against Great Britain, then maybe if the location was of better proximity such an issue would have not existed. Overall, in sports it is understandable that playing location has its effects on sports events. However, it might be more significant for a small team sport that is still making its way, and inching step by step to have a more competitive sphere rather than being dominated by one nation.

The different challenges discussed by the different interviewees revolve around awareness of the sport, its promotion, and limited resources. Financial resources are necessary to elevate American football in Finland. Also, financial resources are necessary in the US to make the sport more sustainable and less stressful for athletes and organizations. F1 mentioned that it does not seem possible to restructure the football association in Finland due to the lack of resources for such matters. While in the US the WFA managed to be founded and prosper under a nonprofit business model that received the support of society and different organizations.

The Finnish American football environment is considerably culturally specific; operated within the country's sport system, adapted to the principle of leisure sport/ sport for all. Observing how American football is organized in Finland, as it is provided by local clubs, playing in multiple divisions under promotion and relegation format, and all overseen and regulated by the American Football Association of Finland (SAJL). Whilst in the USA, women's American football operated under different leagues on their own not overseen by a sport federation/ association.

7.2 Theoretical contributions

In examining the globalization of sport, particularly in the context of American football, the study identifies a pattern that illustrates the sport's spread and development. The recognized pattern as explained by Lee and Kim (2016) begins with the sport's origins within its respective nations or, followed by its growth and expansion within those cultures. For example, organized women's football occurred later following the establishment of men's football. However, it is important to note that this pattern occurred during different times that did not address women's sport as addressed and as deemed vital as present times.

Moreover, with increased interconnectedness between different cultures worldwide, initially through trade, missionary work, and military presence, sporting activities of different origin cultures are spread across borders (Lee & Kim, 2016). However, in more recent times the spread of sport activities is primarily driven through channels such as the internet and the various media outlets, which act as driving forces for globalization.

Over time, these sporting activities could become embedded with varying extents in a globally recognized yet culturally specific manner (Cousens & Barnes, 2009). Such can be facilitated by investments in organizational and economic aspects, as well as the appeal of sport to the accommodating cultures.

Furthermore, international governing bodies are born further reinforcing the existence of the sport by providing regulated sport environments leading to strengthening the connections between participating cultures (Gupta 2009; Sherry et al. 2016). This is evident in the creation of the International Federation of American Football that provides different international competitions for men and women in both tackle and flag football. Within that international environment, varying levels of performance and engagement, along with distinct characteristics are observed in women's American football and its global landscape.

The below figure demonstrates the recognized phases of the globalization of sport according to the conceptual framework of this study through investigating the globalization of American football.

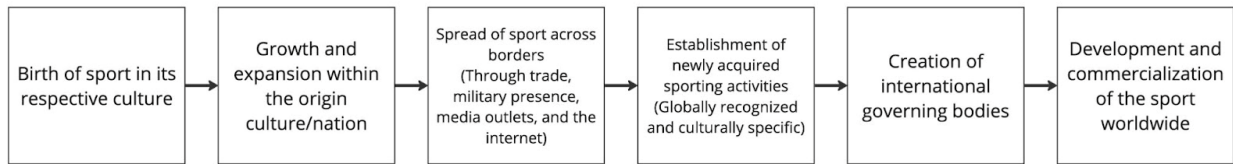


FIGURE 8. The phases of the globalization process of sport as recognized in American football.

In addition, with the elements of sport management in discussion, comes the impacts of organization of sport through institutions that are established and become rooted in its respective culture and governmental structure (Cousens & Barnes 2009). Also, observed are obvious differences between the European sport system and the American sport system, with each of the systems having its pros and cons. Nonetheless, regardless of the followed model of organized sports, it is essential to have governing bodies to maintain and regulate sport under clear rules involving international, local, and ethical considerations. All of which considerably paves the way for sport to be established and developed after it is based in a solid structure.

DeGaris (2015) reports that generating revenues and managing expenses are investigated by scholars. Hence, a sustainable sport model/ structure that promotes sport and provides financial support for its constituent parts is essential to the stability and progression of sport activities. Furthermore, this highlights the significance of consistent engagement in sport practice and efficient management of its operations, as these activities play a vital role in promoting the local and international visibility and recognition of the sport. Additionally, as suggested by Santos and Moreno (2020) the economic and marketing aspects of organized sport of any level are quite essential and highly impactful on how sport is perceived, practiced, and progressed. As evident through this research, women's American football faces financial challenges on the local and international levels. For example, lack of financial support is affecting both participation and promotion of the sport and in the local and international environments, which in turn affects the overall development of the sport locally and internationally.

In addition, the significance of organizational culture and effective leadership in management and coaching is widely recognized for shaping the culture within sport organizations and impacting

their success in sport and managerial performance. This is evident in American football, a team sport that often involves personnel from diverse cultural backgrounds. Deissler (2012) highlights the essential role of intercultural skills for leaders in the competitive sports field. Furthermore, Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2013) emphasize that sports foster interactions between individuals from different cultures, further emphasizing the importance of organizational culture and effective leadership in the realm of sports.

The below figure demonstrates the suggested elements of successful small sport organizations according to the conceptual framework of the study through investigating the globalization of American football.

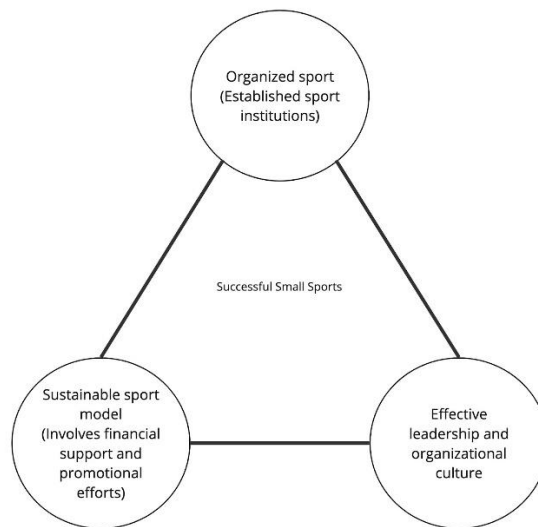


FIGURE 9. The elements of successful small sport organizations as suggested by investigating women's American football.

The study's discussion encompasses key conceptual elements of sports globalization, including the notion of glocalization in sport and the management aspects associated with it. Hence, allows the study to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics and implications of globalization in small sports, offering relevant insights into the interplay between local and global influences within organized sport.

7.3 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This part of the study outlines the constraints that were encountered during the research process. Firstly, a questionnaire in this research was intended to provide deeper insight into different aspects of our study. That questionnaire was designed for two key members; the players, and the staff members of the national teams that participated in the Women's World Championship 2022. The questionnaire was planned to be in an online form to be distributed to the players and staff after the tournament. However, due to unfortunate circumstances the distribution channel was disconnected, impairing the ability to reach the target participants. In conjunction with the questionnaire, it was planned to perform a few interviews that would include some of those athletes and other personnel around the sport. Fortunately, some of the interviews were performed successfully. However, ideally more interviews would have been carried out. For example, it would have added more value to the research to interview representatives from the IFAF, and female football players.

To ensure ethical integrity, this study implemented measures to address possible concerns. Prior to conducting the research, participants were provided with clear information regarding the purpose and utilization of their insights. Informed consent was obtained from all interviewees, affirming their voluntary participation. By upholding ethical standards throughout the study, the rights and privacy of the participants were respected, further enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

Since women's American football is heavily under-researched, and according to the limitations of this study, comes several arrangements for consideration in future research. For example, conducting in-depth interviews with female football players would provide valuable insights into their experiences, challenges, and perspectives, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their unique involvement in the sport. Additionally, engaging in interviews with representatives from the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) would offer insights into the development, challenges, and future plans for the sport on a global scale. Moreover, interviews with representatives from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) would provide valuable perspectives on the potential inclusion of American football, both flag and tackle, in the Olympic Games.

Furthermore, the following suggestions, which were drawn from the results in this research, can be considered for future research topics. A comparative analysis of women's American football leagues across different countries or regions would provide valuable insights into variations in league structures, player development programs, funding models, and growth strategies. Additionally, a study tracking the development and experiences of female athletes over time would shed light on factors influencing participation, skill progression, career pathways, and the impact of support systems. Another important area to study could be an examination of coaching and leadership in women's American football programs would offer insights into effective coaching methodologies, leadership styles, and mentorship programs. Also, a comparative analysis of sports policies and funding mechanisms could uncover differences in support for women's American football, assessing the impact of policy decisions and funding allocation on growth, sustainability, and access to resources. Moreover, Exploring the direction of the sport towards Olympic inclusion would involve examining the criteria, considerations, and feasibility of its inclusion, as well as understanding the potential impacts and challenges associated with such a milestone. Finally, investigating the development and potential for growth of American football in less developed areas, such as African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries, would shed light on grassroots initiatives, cultural adaptations, and opportunities for international collaboration. These research considerations offer significant opportunities to advance our knowledge and understanding of women's American football and contribute to its continued development and success.

7.4 Conclusions

The theories of homogenization, heterogenization, and glocalization can provide explanation to the bigger process of globalization. That being the case, sport is integrated within that process, and American football is becoming more present in the global sport environment. Accordingly, the globalization of sports has opened new possibilities and opportunities for athletes and teams to compete on a global scale. This can be seen in major sporting events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup, where athletes from all over the world come together to showcase their skills and compete for medals. However, contention for the attention and engagement of fans extends to small international events, as the significance of exposure and visibility is widely recognized in the process of sustainability and growth of sports.

In this context, globalization in American football is observed in many ways as different organizations from different countries are participating in various efforts around the sports. Also, growth of American football events, increased commercialization, and the development of the sport allow it to be more involved in the global sports industry. It is tangible that over the years American football has experienced growth and spread of its activities, teams, and athletes beyond their local boundaries to other regions of the world. Additionally, globalization in American football has led to the existence of the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) that provides and regulates various football activities for men and women, which sets to further legitimize the growth of American football events internationally. Moreover, a globalized American football environment has led to increased cultural exchange and the sharing of sporting knowledge and skills across borders.

Furthermore, between the current reality and the ambitions, challenges and opportunities of women's American football comes the research of this niche in women's sport. The research aims to explore and shed light on women's American football as it is heavily under-researched and could benefit from a proactive approach towards its environment. Additionally, by addressing the three research questions posed in the research methodology chapter the study is able to lay the groundwork for the current status of women's American football.

In practice, American football has experienced considerable growth around the world. However, in the women's category the sport faces several challenges in sustainability, promotion, and funding. Hence, questions are raised about the development of women's American football and the need for increased investment and support for the participation of women in the sport. Nevertheless, despite the challenges of the availability of women athletes in tackle football, women's flag football appears to be more successful than women's tackle football in attracting female players. Accordingly, women's flag football has gained popularity in various regions of the world, including the United States and Finland, and has seen an increase in the number of women athletes participating in the sport. This success may be attributed even partially to the less physical nature of the game, making it more accessible and more attractive for women athletes. Further supported

by the vision and efforts of the different organizations including IFAF to include flag football in the 2028 Los Angeles summer Olympic games.

American football including women's American football has the potential to become a part of the Olympics in the future, but it is still underdeveloped in different areas, leaving enough room for investment and commercialization. However, there are certain challenges that need to be addressed, such as the lack of funding that affects several areas like promotion, sustainability, growth, and development in the different local environments which can resonate to the international environment. For example, the findings and analysis concerning the IFAF WWC tournament events suggest that women's tackle football is dominated by the US national team. However, it has also shown progress in performance, with competition getting closer, and stability overall. To overcome these challenges, a more collaborative effort is encouraged both nationally and internationally, including the involvement of IFAF. Additionally, both in Finland and in USA there is a need to attract new fans, staff, supporters, and players from different circles, categories, and demographics, and expand beyond the familiar circles of family and friends. To achieve this, the focus could be on maximizing funding and creating more channels that can attract new circles and categories of players, fans, and supporters.

It is important to address possible ethical issues in women's American football whether in practice or in research. For example, prioritizing the physical and mental well-being of athletes is not only essential from an ethical standpoint but also crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the sport. This can be addressed by providing necessary and quality coaching resources for the athletes to be able to perform in as safe as possible environment. Additionally, mental health is essential to the performance of the players on and off the field as they need to lead a healthy lifestyle. This can be addressed by the availability of informed and educated coaches who care about their athletes and pay attention to their mental health and provide necessary support. Moreover, another point that combines both health aspects in contact sports is the concussion protocols which need to be strict and prioritizing the athletes long term health over participation in play. Also, it is essential to prioritize the athletes' well-being by ensuring they have equitable access to comprehensive therapy services tailored to their specific needs. These considerations highlight the ethical concerns

involved in promoting the athletes' welfare and ensuring their long-term health while participating in the sport.

Overall, women's American football has experienced different phases throughout its lifetime making it more resilient and profound. Hence, allocation of resources becomes essential for the stability and sustainability of the sport. Also, it is clear that women's American football has a market for it, and according to the IFAF activities and ambitions that market seem to have great potential. Finally, as the sports industry continues to expand and evolve, it is crucial for athletes, teams, and organizations to keep pace with these changes and adapt to the shifting landscape of sports competition. By doing so, they can ensure their continued success and contribute to the growth and development of sports worldwide.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. A1 interview questions.

1. What comes to your mind when you hear “Globalization in American Football?
2. How do you see the American Football development?
3. When A1 mentioned NFL Europe I asked him (When/ how it started, what happened to it?)
4. How does American Football International promotes the game in correlation to the growth of the game?
5. What do you think about the WWC 2022?
6. What do you think WWC brings to the sport?
7. What do you feel about the Finnish team? Historically, how was its (Finnish national team) performance from your opinion? Do you think they can challenge the US?
8. Why do people stay away from comparing themselves to the US team?
9. Do you think Football is more organized in Finland than in the US?
10. Was the organizing of the event in 2022 better than in 2013?
11. What about the organization? Is it any different, like organizing this event?
12. What do you think about Canada? Shouldn't they provide better performance, since they're like the neighboring country to the US and they have the second largest professional football league for men like the CFL?
13. What are your suggestions to improve this tournament on any level?
14. Can you explain what's the difference between the Women's World Championship like this one, and a woman's world games?
15. How can we improve this tournament? Even if there's no clear problem. But there's always room to be better in a way or like you want to have a bigger brand.

APPENDIX 2. F1 interview questions.

1. Globalization in American football, what comes to your mind when you hear that?
2. To narrow down a little bit, how is it globalization benefiting Finnish American football?
3. How do you see the sports growing and developing leagues wide, and national teams wide?
4. Do you think that the people who work in football need to be more proactive?
5. How did Finland get the bid to host the World Championship again?
6. Do we have numerical data from that event (2013)? (For comparison purposes)
7. What's your actual work, scope of work, and title?
8. from your point of view, does the Women World Championship affect youth in any way?

APPENDIX 3. F2 interview questions.

1. Can you describe the organization and structure of the women's national American football team in Finland?
2. How do you think globalization in sports has affected the development of women's American football in Finland? In what ways? / Can you provide examples?
3. How does the IFAF Women's World Championship event impact the development and performance of the Finnish national team?
4. What is the recruitment process for the national team? and how did it go for the WWC 2022 event?
5. What ongoing or recurring challenges do you face in organizing and managing the team, and how do you overcome them?
6. Is their retention and development procedures for the national team players? / Are there any ongoing development or training programs for national team players?
7. How does your organization promote women's American football in Finland?
8. How do you see the sport developing in the future in Finland and for the national team?
9. What are the main challenges you face in terms of sport management? Can you provide examples?
10. How does the IFAF WWC event impact the development, athletes' performance, and management of the sport? And what do you see as its importance for the sport?
11. Can you describe the culture within the women's national team? Generally, or in WWC 2022.
12. How do you think cultural and economic (financial) factors have affected the sport management and performance of the Finnish national team? Can you provide examples?
13. What effective management practices have you applied in women's tackle football, and what areas do you think need improvement?
14. How has the management process of the team been affected by the globalization of the sport?
15. What do you think needs to be done to increase the popularity and visibility of women's American football in Finland?
16. Is there anything else you would like to discuss or talk about?

APPENDIX 4. A2 interview questions.

1. Can you tell me about your involvement in women's American football, including your background and current activities in the sport?
2. What specific impacts of globalization have you observed on the development of women's American football, and can you provide any examples?
3. What challenges and opportunities do you see for the future development of women's American football, especially in terms of player recruitment, training, and competition?
4. How does the IFAF Women's World Championship event impact the development, athletes' performance, and management of the sport, and what do you see as its importance for the sport?
5. What effective management and coaching practices have you observed in women's tackle football, and what areas do you think need improvement?
6. How do you perceive the current state of women's tackle football in Europe compared to the US, in terms of player performance, organization, coaching, and other factors?
7. Could the next step/ leap in development of women's American football be in Europe rather in the US?
8. What do you think needs to be done to increase the popularity and visibility of women's American football, both in the US and internationally?
9. Is there anything you would like to discuss or talk about?