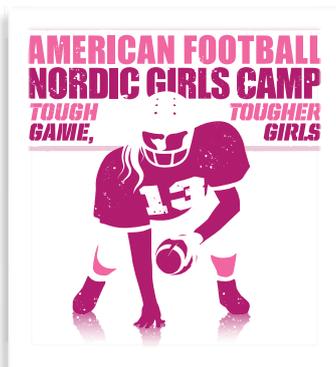




# TOUGH GAME - TOUGHER GIRLS

*Laaksohanti, Espoo 28.-30.9.2018*



**Nordic Girls Camp is a joint football program dedicated to establish all girls leagues and junior national teams in the Nordic countries – with a vision of a Nordic junior national tournament as already exist for boys. When we combined the Nordic resources of the four countries of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, we had a greater possibility to achieve the dream that individual countries could not have reached on their own.**

**After the first year (2018) with two held camps, the first in Stockholm on March with 50 girls and latest in Espoo at the end of September with 30 girls, we can announce that there is definitely an interest among and for girls playing tackle football, and there's reason to continue the program. Because GIRLS CAN.**

A few facts about young women's tackle football in general: no all girls leagues are played, except in Utah, USA, where there are 6 teams in the league this year. In US High Schools there are in total approximately 2,000 girls playing with boys. At the same time in the Nordic countries there are more than 200 girls playing tackle football with boys or women. In both Finland and Sweden we have annually appx. 100 licensed girl players, aged under 21 years. Denmark has had tens of girls, while in Norway the amount of girls is still under 20. In Finland and Sweden there are senior women's leagues and national teams to aim for. Norway has ca 6 small women's teams and has had a 9-man league that is now turned into a 7's tournament league. Denmark has 1-2 teams and wants a league.

These girls are tough. They have all played with boys. They've had to, if they wanted to tackle. In Finland girls can continue with boys until 16 years U17 age group. Sweden allows girls and women play free in men's and boys' leagues and teams without any gender restrictions. Norway has similar rules as Finland, however some women have played with boys and men because of the lack of a women's league the last two years. No men are allowed to ladies' leagues. All are aiming to all girls' leagues, but it takes time and effort. That's under construction now.

We had first ever girls' football camp in Sweden on March, during the International Women's Day weekend. Pre-season timing was a success. Girls who had never played could start their career in a all girls' group. They all participated the games on Sunday. We met on Friday evening after school, travelling all-around from Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden to the site. Saturday and Sunday was filled with introductions; introductions to staff, coaches, girls, football techniques, tactics, game books, game plans etc. Yet we had time to both talk and take it to the action. We had 50 girls attendance and had it possible to set up two games on Sunday, both U15 and U19 scrimmages between offence and defence. - You can share the great atmosphere from the camp from this unique player made music video [GIRLS CAN](#). Warm thanks to our Swedish partners!

## Nordic Girls Camp #2 in Finland

At the last weekend of September most of the season games were over in the Nordic. Traditional matchup between Finns and Swedes as well as the boys' Nordics are the annual highlights at the end of a season. This autumn we added something very different to the mix - some 30 girls and 15 people staff joined for the Nordic Girls Camp in Espoo with tons of girl energy and many old and new international friends.



As most of the girls had participated the first camp the program could dive deeper into football tactics and strategy. We also wanted to share ideas and important information of how to grow as a girl athlete in a very physical sport and in a new horizon for a woman to have a career in American football. On the agenda we had individual position skills, techniques and tactics



in slow motion and full speed, offence and defence specialities and teamwork. Added with lectures. The camp football program aimed for offence against defence scrimmage with familiar game plan from Stockholm. Camp Head Coach Hege Indresand motivated her coaching staff to create even more ideas of how to gain all set goals. This time defence made it extremely well beating the offence. The offence was led by Finnish U19 girls national team HC Jan Österlund and Hege herself. Camp D-coaches Nana Olavuo and Paula Lehtinen, both players from Finnish national team, really succeeded leading their girls.

We can give some respects also to British BAFA and Head Coach for British National Women's Team, Jim Messenger and Captain Phoebe Schecter who participated and collaborated with the Nordic countries in the first camp as they too are interested in the development of junior women's leagues. Phoebe did not make it to Finland now even if she wanted, as she was hired as a full season interim to Buffalo Bills. The NFL team Buffalo Bills, to note. The doors are opening for women in football and we are also creating the future of women football within these camps; not only for the athletes, but also to coaches, team managers, physical trainers etc.

Coming back to the game, most of the girls practiced multiple positions, both directions, and many of them gained experience in a totally new position. This is always an asset, not only to girls but to their teams too. We want to thank all position coaches helping to get the girls ready: Linda

Lindström (DL), Linda Nielsen (OL), Tine Eielsen (QB), Julia Palm (LB), Ami Rubinstein (RB), Paula Lehtinen (LB), Nana Olavuo (DB/WR) and Katarina Olsson (AC).

## Life of a young athlete is not only football

An essential part of an athlete's life is keeping up the routines. Routines for a good and long sleep at nights, enough and healthy food, hydration, proper recovery, rest and yet of course a comprehensive practice regiment. We had Paula's lecture on young women athlete's essential nutrition. It was not only girls who learned more. Paula discussed how important it is to get enough minerals, especially iron, and especially during the menstruation. We talked about fats and oils and their role in securing the muscles from the hits and bruises. We learned about beans and berries, their meaning to our health and we talked about British sisters' Lift the lid -campaign for openness around mental health issues. There's so many topics to cover, and we will continue our lecture program as being an instrumental part of our camps.

During the lectures we screened some of the coach and player CV's and place the seed for an athlete CV. Girls need CV's later on in their life, but they can start it already: an athlete CV consists of records, highlights, descriptions of career etc. Let's see how many will create them and how many uses them. An athlete CV is needed when you apply for sports oriented schools, an US High School, for any sports team and later on in work life you might have some added value for being an amateur with a semi-professional athlete's curriculum.



We have physical, psychological and social content in our camps. Getting new friends is one of the main social goals at the camps. We all share passion to football, which is a start, but there's much more to talk to. All of our Nordic girls study English and at the camps you are in a need of using your foreign languages. Using a language means always gaining a new level. Girls have social media profiles and they are networking widely. This second camp showed that girls had networked between the camps too. This is just a beginning for a hopefully strong and a long lasting story of a tough game's tougher Nordic girls.

## Thank you

We camp organisers want to thank girls and their families as well as our Nordic football organisations for giving us this opportunity to create the concept. And finally very warm thanks and a special shoutout to those who trusted us and made our camp in Finland possible: Amer Sports / **Wilson football**, **City of Espoo** / Sports Division and photographer **Hilarious Hobbit** / Anu Tiilikainen. Thank you!

Alexandra Naumanen (SAJL), Helena Lindeen (SAFF), Hege Indresand (AFN), Lars Carlsen (DAFF)

