American Football

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Hi everyone, I would like to welcome you at my presentation about American football.

Here you can see what I am going to talk about today. At the beginning I am going to tell you something about the history of the American football, then I am going to look at some of the most important rules, football in the USA, after that something about American football in Europe and in Czech Republic and finally some best players in history and nowadays.

*History*

American football evolved from sports rugby and soccer. It was a college sport and every match had different rules. It was played using the rules of the host school. First match was played on November 6th in 1869 between Rutgers university and Princeton. If we compare this to American football from today it was a different sport. For example, they used a round ball, they did not throw the ball, ball was on the ground and they just tried to push the ball into the opponent ‘s goal. After 10 years, a player from Yale - Walter Camp, set some important rules. Some rules were created before, but Walter Camp changed them. That is why he is called „Father of American Football”. After this American football became a separate sport from rugby.

Because of some serious injuries and deaths in 1905 President Roosevelt abolished games unless major changes were made. So in 1905 62 colleges met in New York and changed the rules plus created a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). This association still exists. But even after this it was still a different sport than what we can see nowadays on TV. In 1918 it firstly started looking like American football as we know it. Players could firstly use forward pass; they could catch the ball wherever on the field etc.

In 1892 the first player got paid for playing American football. His name was Pudge Heffelfinger. He was paid 500 dollars to play a game for Allegheny. Over time it became common to pay players and there were many problems and money wars between the colleges until NFL solve the problem. It was in 1922 when NFL had established itself as an American premier professional football league. I will talk more about NFL later.

In 30s, thanks to NFL, American football stopped being just a college sport and in 60s it became the most popular sport in the USA.

*Rules*

American football has a lot of rules and some of them are really complicated, so I am going to tell you just the most important rules that are used in NFL.

2 teams of 11 players play on the 120 yards long and 53 yards wide field for 60 minutes. But these 60 minutes are just playing time and it is divided into the 4 quarters. Between the first and second quarter and the third and fourth quarter is a short break and halftime is 15 minutes long. Game is very often stopped, so an average NFL game is played over 3 hours.

Every team has three units, offensive unit, defensive unit, and special team. These units change during the game, it depends which team is on the ball. Teams may substitute any numbers of players between downs (to explain: one down is one play).

American football is played by scoring points. The winner is the team that has scored more points at the end of the game. There are 5 ways to score points. The first is a touchdown (TD). The touchdown, worth six points, is the most valuable scoring play in American football and it is scored when a ball is advanced into, caught in or recovered in the opposing team´s end zone. End zone is that blue and red part of the field you can see on the picture on the right. If a team scores touchdown, they have six points and then they attempt a try or conversion, more commonly known as the points-after-touchdown, which is a single scoring opportunity. There are two ways how you can score points after touchdown - you can kick the extra point, that is worth one point, or you can take a risk and try a two-point conversion. The two-point conversion is a normal play (down), when a team tries to score by what normally would be a touchdown, but they have just one attempt. When is the team successful they have two points. It is necessary to say that two-point conversion is much harder to score, and it is very risky.

Next possibility to score is a field goal. It is worth three points. The field goal is scored when the ball is kicked through the uprights and over the crossbars of the defence’s goal. After a field goal or points after touchdown attempt, the scoring team or kicking team must kick the ball off to the other team.

The last way to score is safety. Safety is the most uncommon way to score. It is scored when the ball carrier is tackled in their own end zone and it is worth two points, which are awarded to the defence. After safety, the team that conceded the safety, kicks the ball to the scoring team. So much for scoring.

As I said before, American football is complicated game.

The football itself is an oval ball. Everybody probably knows that.

Team that are in offense try to get on the other side the field and score a touchdown. They always have a set of 4 plays, known as downs, to reach ten yards. If they advance ten or more yards, they are awarded a new set of four downs. But if they don´t, the other team goes on the ball and start where the first team ended. That is the reason why teams don´t play the fourth downs, usually they punt the ball to the other team, or if they are in the field goal range, they might attempt to score a field goal instead (the punt means kicking the ball far away).

There are two ways the offense can advance the ball: running and passing. Running is easy to understand. A quarterback, the leader of the offense, gives the ball to some running back or a tight-end and he is running as fast as he can. Passing is more complicated. A forward pass can by legally attempted only if the passer is behind the line of scrimmage and only one forward pass can be attempted per down.

Players can also pass the ball backward at any point during the play. And the last rule I´ll tell you is that the play ends when player with the ball is tackled or goes out of the field or his helmet comes off or when ball hits the ground. Then it is the dead ball and game is stopped.

Now I would like to show you the short video about the rules, I hope it helps you understand them better.

*Football in the USA*

Let´s now turn to football in the USA. As you probably know, American football is the most popular sport in the USA. I mean professional football. College football is the third most popular. Do you know what is the second most popular sport in the US?

But maybe you don´t know that American football is important for the culture in the US. For example, Superbowl is de facto a national holiday. In 2015 114 million Americans watched the Superbowl and it is the most popular single-day sporting event in the US. In some countries, for example in Texas, is American football compared to a religion. And thanksgiving football is a huge American tradition.

During the season, that is 4 months, is every Sunday The Game Day and millions of Americans watch football the whole day.

Football in USA is also the most-played sport by high school and college athletes. In 2012 study, the NCAA estimated there were around 1.1 million high school football players and almost 70,000 college players. It is unbelievable. Now I would like to hear your opinion - do you think that there exist some other sport that is so important for any other country?

OK, thank you.

And now something about the greatest league in American football. THE NFL.

NFL started in 1920 and from 1970 it is the prime professional league in the United States. Nowadays it is divided into 2 conferences, the NFC and the AFC. Both conferences are divided into 4 divisions. On the upper picture you can see the divisions and which ones are in the NFC and which ones in the AFC.

32 teams play in the NFL and every team plays 16 games per season before play-off. 2 games versus every divisional rival and 10 random games. After these 16 games, 14 teams go to play-off. The first of every division plus 3 best of every conference.

Play-off has 4 rounds. First is wild card round. Winners of NFC and AFC don´t play the first round, they go automatically to the second round. Second round is the divisional round. Third round is the AFC and NFC championship. And the last round is the Superbowl.

That´s all I have to say about American football in the USA.

*American football in the world*

We will now turn our attention to American football in the world. I´ll tell you something about three countries in the world, but not from the Europe, where football is very popular. Do you have any idea which countries could it be?

American football is very popular in Canada. In Canada NFL is the third-most popular league behind the National Hockey League and CFL (Canadian Football League). Also, in Mexico American football has a long history – it was introduced to the sport industry in 1896. Today there are over 16 millions people watching NFL and in 1950s American football was the second-most popular sport, behind football (soccer). In Mexico the American football is played professionally and as a part of the college sports system. The Liga de Futbol Americano Profesional is the professional league in Mexico, and it was founded in 2016. The third country is Japan. The sport was introduced in Japan in 1934. In 2010 there were more than 400 high school football teams in Japan with over 15,000 participants and over 100 college teams.

We´ve looked at American football in the world and know let´s have a look on American football in Europe.

*American football in Europe*

American football was never popular in Europe, but that has been changing for the few last years. Today is the American football played in more than 30 European countries, which each of has its own league. I´m going to tell you about 4 of them.

The first league I would like to tell you something about is the Superserien. The Superserien is the top American football league in Sweden. The four best teams advance to the play-offs to attempt becoming the Swedish champions. It is important to say that the Superserien consists of 4 teams, including the most famous Sweden´s team - Stockholm Mean Machines. It is a small league, but the quality is not bad.

Next good-quality league in Europe is the Vaahteraliiga. The Vaahteraliiga is the premier American football league in Finland. The winner of the league is crowned the Finnish champion. The most successful team in the Vaahraliiga is the Helsinky Roosters. In the Vaahteraliiga 7 teams play and first four go to the play-off.

The Austrian Football League is one of the greatest and most popular American football leagues in Europe. It was founded in 1984. In the AFL play two of the most successful teams in Europe and that are Salzburg Lions and Vienna Ramblocks. In 2010 a first non-Austrian team joined the league: our Prague Panthers. The team left AFL in 2016, but there are still some non-Austrian teams in the AFL like Bratislava´s Monarchs.

Probably the best league in Europe is the German Football league. It was formed in 1979 and at present, it beats other European-leagues hands down. Many European players aspire to play for teams in GFL, for teams like The New Yorker Lions or the Schwabisch Unicorns. Many players from other countries across the Europe and North America play in GFL

Now I would like to tell you something about the two international leagues in Europe.

The prime international league in Europe since 2014 is formed from The BIG 6 European Football Leagues. It is a European Cup style tournament for European American football teams. The final game of the BIG6 is called the Eurobowl and the most recent champions are the New Yorker Lions.

The second-tier competition in Europe is the EFL. Until 2013 it was the prime Europe´s international cup/league. Today 6 teams play in EFL and the final is called the EFL Bowl. Most recent champions are the Thonon Black Panthers, team from France. The winner of the EFL Bowl can promote to the BIG6 if it beats the worst team from BIG6.

Since we are talking about football in Europe I have to tell you something about the American football in the Czech Republic.

*Bitters league*

Bitters League is the Czech League of American football. It was founded in 1994 and it is organized by the Czech American Football Association. Bitters league is divided into 4 leagues, or division if you like. The prime is Paddock League, then second league, third league and fourth league. The final of the Paddock league is called Czech Bowl, final of the second league is the Silver Bowl, final of the third league is Bronze Bowl and the final of the fourth league is the Iron Bowl. Most successful team of the Bitters league is the Prague Black Panthers. They won 18 titles and the last winners are Prague Lions.

That´s all I have to say about Football in Europe. Last of all I would like to tell you about some of the best players in the history of American football and some of the best players at the moment.

*Best players*

The best player in history of American football is probably Jerry Rice. This wide receiver played from 1985 to 2004. He is a three-time Super Bowl champion and holds the NFL records in touchdowns, total receptions, total receiving yards, and touchdown receptions. From 2010 he is a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He is on the picture up there with the number 80.

Tom Brady is probably the greatest quarterback in history of the NFL. Most of his achievements he accomplished in the New England Patriots and he is a legend of this team, but today he plays in Tampa Bay Buccaneers. This season he won his sixth Super Bowl and become Super Bowl MVP for the four-time. Tom Brady holds a lot of Super Bowl records, for example Super Bowl record for most touchdowns passes or most passing yards. You can see him in this slide up on the right, that man without a helmet.

Next player I would like to tell you something about is Joe Montana. This legendary quarterback played from 1979 to 1994. Joe Montana is a four-time Super Bowl champion, three-time Super Bowl MVP and two time NFL MVP. He was really insane.

Now something about a young stars of NFL. Patrick Mahomes is a quarterback in the Kansas City Chiefs and he is absolutely awesome. He is 25 years old, and he already won one Super Bowl, became Super Bowl MVP, NFL MVP, NFL player of the year and much more. Some experts think that one day he can be even better than Tom Brady.

Aaron Donald is the only defensive player on this list. To be honest, he is probably my favourite NFL player. He is a defensive tackle in the LA Rams and he is the beast. He is a three-time NFL defensive player of the year, NFL sacks leader and he is in the NFL 2010 All-decade Team. Aaron Donald is on the picture in the middle, the player without a T-shirt. He is very special for his combination of strength and pretty good speed.

Last superstar from NFL I would like to tell you about is Julio Jones. He is the wide receiver in the Atlanta Falcons and he has one of the highest jump in the NFL. He has a rare combination of size, speed, catching ability, strength, leaping ability and body control. These attributes make almost impossible to stop him. Julio Jones is a two-times NFL receiving leader, seven-times Pro Bowl player, he is in the NFL 2010s All Decade Team and much more. BTW Julio Jones is the player on the right down there.

The last player on this list has never played in the NFL, but he is probably the best Czech Player in the history of American football. Jan Dundacek is a quarterback and a seven-times MVP of the Bitters league. He is the Karel Gott of American football.

At the end here are some questions on you.

That is all I have prepared for you today, so thank you for your attention and do you have any questions for me?