

# Finnish Doubles Success



Boris Chernov 2026

# About author

## **BORIS CHERNOV**

- Coach since 2011
- Club work Smash-Kotka, 2011-2014
- Jarkko Nieminen Tennis Academy, 2015-2017
- Finnish Tennis Federation, 2015 -
- Patrik Niklas-Salminen, 2017-2019
- Harri Heliovaara, 2018 -
- HVS tennis, 2021 -
- Linus Lagerbohm, 2024 -
- Took part of a process with players such as Lloyd Glasspool, Henri Kontinen, Henry Patten and coaches such as Louis Cayer.



# What make us successful in doubles?

- **Henri Kontinen, Harri Heliövaara.** In total - over 700 ATP level matches; 39 ATP titles; 5 Grand Slam titles; 3 ATP Finals titles; Davis Cup 1/2; two players ranked top3 in the last 8 years
- Connection to the best doubles systems in the world - “British system/ LTA” (Harri’s path) and “Individual system” (Henri’s path). We know what they do and how they do. We can always ask questions.
- Upcoming potential: Patrik Niklas-Salminen, Eero Vasa, Oskari Paldanius, college guys
- Fundamental knowledge about doubles which can be applied already in junior tennis. For example in clubs like HVS during junior tennis sessions, coaches are doing doubles specific stuff with better purpose

# About the presentation

## Henry Kontinen, Harri Heliovaara

- Two different individuals
- Two different players
- Two different families
- Two different pathways to the top

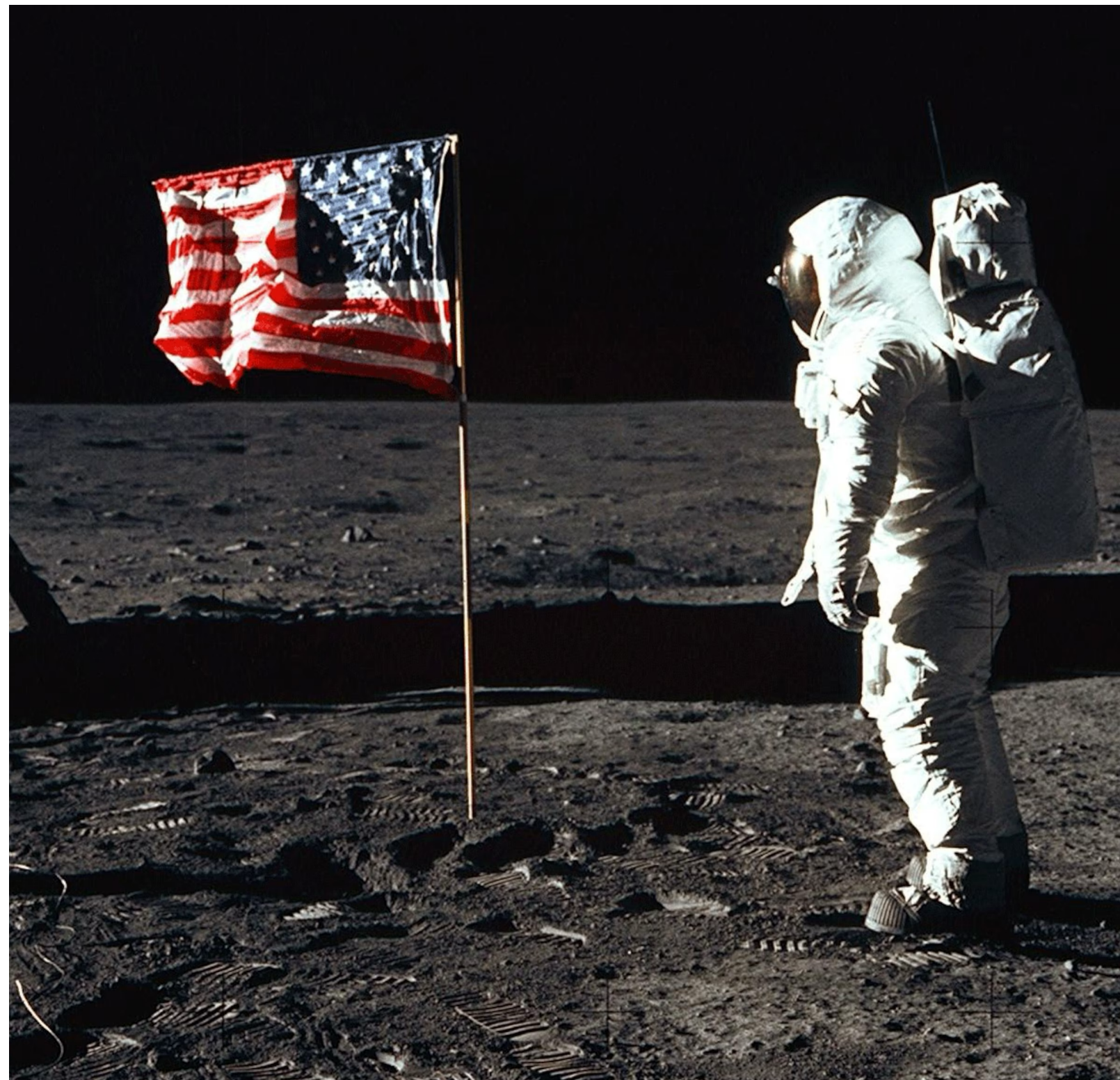
My goal is to find similarities which could unite their tennis journeys into “Finnish way” of becoming successful doubles player.



# Assumption 1

*Most likely without Henri, there wouldn't be Harri as doubles player and without both of them we wouldn't call us successful country in doubles*

# “The first ever on the moon”



- We need someone who show the path, “the first ever on the moon”. And if we got one, we should give a credit.
- At the end of all its about showing that “**I can do it**” so “**you can do it**”, that’s **how** I’m doing it and that’s **why** I’m doing it this way
- **Learning** from each other, **sharing** and **cooperating** while building **your own way**.
- **Being curios** and **being ambitious** is crucial!

# Assumption 2

*Having different characters and playing identities is normal, however certain skills should be in common. It's not "copy/paste", it's finding "your own way" but learning from each other and accepting the standard*



# Playing Identity



## **HENRI KONTINEN**

Great technique

Outstanding serve

Artist on court

More about the feel rather than the pattern

Good knowledge about own strengths and weaknesses

Practice smartly according to the needs

Enjoyment is more important than the outcome

Playing with instincts

Big match player

## **HARRI HELIOVAARA**

Solid all around (not having any specific weapon)

High discipline in day to day, and in matches

High demand and high standard for himself and people around him

Analytical

Both patterns and the feel are important

Practice volumes are high (tennis and fitness)

Win is more important than enjoyment

Playing with knowledge

Every match player

# What do they have in common?

1. Very competitive.
2. Creative problem solvers.
3. Both are comfortable in international environment.
4. Both appreciate and enjoy pressure from the biggest moments of the game.
5. Both are smart tactically.
6. Both like to be prepared for matches, tho in their own ways.
7. Both are curious about the the sport, they want to understand details of the game, learn from the best.



# Assumption 3

*Being a successful doubles player required from both to be one the best players in the country among multiple generations*

# Junior and Pro Singles ranking

- Harri

**ITF** - #16

**ATP** - #194 (at 22yo)

- Henri

**ITF** - #4

**ATP** - #220 (top300 ATP at 19yo)

How many Finnish players were top20 ITF ranking born between 1980 to 2008?



# Assumption 4

*It's often required to do serious decisions in life such as: change or even quit school, move to different club/ city/ country / continent, change parents job, invest serious amount of money, to be alone, etc.*

*It's also in common in junior stage to have longer injury (3 month + off the court)*

# Highlights of pathway Henri

- Tampere tuhnukenttä
- By the age of 11 had some privates with former coach of Bjorn Borg in Sweden; visited IMG already
- Espoo, TCT. “Oli kiva, ei pelleilyä”
- Upsala, Sweden. Moved with the whole family. New school, new training partners, different language. “Enemmän kasvatti, kun kehitti”.
- Prague, Czech. 15yo alone. Biggest decision in becoming tennis player.
- Knee injury (no ITF tournaments between 07.2005 - 09.2006)
- Bradenton; Monte-Carlo
- Parents played huge in development and support

# Highlights of pathway Harri

- Summer camps in Laajasalo
- Great ball boy memories watching Finnish players at SM and CH Tampere
- First time abroad for tennis at 12yo (Nordic Championship)
- Multisport till age 13-14yo (football, golf). Everything within 500m from home.
- Parents were taking care of - driving, nutrition, school and sleep. Didn't involve into coaching
- No systematic morning sessions till 14-15yo (only after school tennis)
- 15-18yo - weekly different coaches, 3 different halls, different practice partners.  
Adaptation skills
- Wrist injury (no ITF tournaments between 01.2007 - 07.2007)
- Johan Landsberg from Sweden taught how to be a pro
- Big decisions - Märsky sports lukio, Johan Landsberg (private coach), finishing first career

# Assumption 5

*Both players had important international impact. Henri since early junior years, Harri later since professional stage.*

# Assumption 6

*Both players had their own (different) ways of being pro tennis player, their practice structure at home, their travelling team on the road, their priorities during tournaments.*

# Assumption 7

*They are having good cooperation culture. Played a lot against each other since early years, practiced a lot in different stages of their career.*

*Key fact - they are happy to share court with each other nowadays and talk about the game on the “same language”*

# Summary of assumptions

1. *Most likely without Henri, there wouldn't be Harri as doubles player and without both of them we wouldn't call us successful country in doubles*
2. *Having different characters and playing identities is normal, however certain skills should be in common. It's not "copy/paste", it's finding "your own way" but learning from each other and accepting the standard*
3. *Being a successful doubles player required from both to be on the best players in the country among multiple generations*
4. *It's often required to do serious decisions in life such as: change or even quit school, move to different club/ city/ country / continent, change parents job, invest serious amount of money, to be alone, etc.*
5. *Both players had important international impact. Henri since early junior years, Harri later since professional stage.*
6. *Both players had their own (different) ways of being pro tennis player, their practice structure at home, their travelling team on the road, their priorities during tournaments.*
7. *They are having good cooperation culture. Played a lot against each other since early years, practiced a lot in different stages of their career.*

1. **Someone should be first**
2. **Being different is ok**
3. **Level should be there.  
No shortcuts**
4. **Big decisions required. Injuries are part of the game**
5. **International impact is very important**
6. **Find your own way in day to day**
7. **Maintain good cooperation culture**

*Could it be our way of reaching new heights?*

**Thank you! Kiitos**