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London Calling: A Semester in the World's Sporting Capital

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London Calling:
A Semester in the World's Sporting Capital

Keywords: *soccer; British sport; study abroad; sport media; gambling*

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Abstract

The case follows four American college students from a small, Liberal Arts institution during a semester-long faculty-led study abroad trip to London, England. The case presents the experiences of these students as they integrate into London society. Mainly viewed through the lens of sport, the students encounter many differences to their preconceived notion of how sports work, providing an obvious platform for discussion and comparison of how sport is organized in different parts of the world. Specifically, the case offers students the opportunity to learn about new sports they may not have encountered before, evaluate the U.S. system of sport management and suggest ways to improve sports both at home and abroad. The international aspect of this case also provides an added cultural element, by focusing on specific events in the United Kingdom (U.K.) sporting calendar that can be used to teach students about another country's sporting identity.

24

London Calling:

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A Semester in the World's Sporting Capital

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"Mary, can I get your thoughts on something?" Dr. Morris asked his colleague while

27

leaning in her office door.

28

Dr. Mary Villareal, the senior sport management faculty member and past chair of the

29

Association of American Colleges & Universities' (AAC&U) Global Engagement Conference

30

planning committee, could tell from the sizable stack of papers in his arms that this would be a

31

long one. She leaned back in her chair and nodded while replying, "Sure Dom. What's up?"

32

Dr. Morris took a seat and set the stack of papers on her desk.

33

"I've just finished looking through the students' reflective papers from our past semester

34

in London." His face lit up, "There is some really amazing stuff here!"

35

It was hard not to be caught up in the enthusiasm Dr. Morris brought to his work.

36

"I structured the trip so each student would have plenty of un-programmed time to make

37

the experience their own. It seemed that some . . ." he stopped and tried to find the right words.

38

"One or two of them . . ." He started again, "Change was there . . . but," he stopped again, and

39

then finally said, "Really only their own words can hope to do justice to their experiences."

40

Mary knew that she would have to wait until, through reading the reflections, she

41

traveled to London with them. Then, maybe Dr. Morris would get around to asking his question.

42

Jake

43

The long flight was over, and Jake was happy to stretch his legs walking through

44

Heathrow Airport with his class of 16 fellow students. Already he could tell that things would be

45

very different from Kalamazoo, Michigan. He grew up there and was surrounded by his parents'

46

passion for the Michigan State Spartans. Already a huge sports fan, lately he had developed a

47 keen interest in European soccer. His knowledge came through playing computer games like
48 *FIFA* and watching the *Champions League* on TNT. He had deliberately not chosen a team to
49 support, so he could enjoy every game without a one-sided emotional investment.

50 Walking through Terminal 5, the students were greeted with various *Welcome to London*
51 billboards, but the largest of them all was an advertisement with an athletic looking man wearing
52 a blue and white striped sports jersey with the tagline “London. I’m home.” One of the other
53 students, Carly, looked confused by this. She had obviously never seen this man before.

54 “That’s Ebere Eze,” Jake said, “he’s one of Queens Park Rangers best and now plays for
55 the England U21 team.”

56 Carly looked bemused. “So why is he welcoming me to London?”

57 Jake laughed. “Well, QPR are a London team who are struggling in the league. They got
58 him from their rivals and have brought him in to help them stay up.”

59 “What do you mean ‘stay up’?” Carly queried.

60 “Well,” Jake began to explain, “If you finish in the bottom three places of the Premier
61 League, you get relegated to the league below. It’s like instead of getting the number #1 draft
62 pick if you have the worst record in the NFL, here you get punished by dropping out of the
63 league and playing against smaller teams until you’re good enough to win that league and come
64 back up! It’s a bit confusing if you’ve never heard of it before, I’m still learning about it all.” As
65 Jake continued on to explain the transfer window, he realized that although he knew a great deal,
66 he still had more to learn about the system of sports in Europe.

67 They were transported by bus (though the driver kept calling it a “coach,” confusing the
68 students) to their student accommodation in Shoreditch, East London. That afternoon their only
69 obligation was to get unpacked and have dinner together, which left a few hours for a quick

70 public transportation ride into central London and back. Although it was short trip and a chilly 5
71 Celsius, the students were blown away by the sheer size and age of the buildings like the Houses
72 of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, and the Tower of London, and surprised to learn that “Big
73 Ben” was actually the bell inside the famous clock tower, rather than the building itself. Any
74 hesitation Jake had about diving headfirst into this new city quickly faded.

75 The bus back to East London was packed. Rowdy foreign tourists - Jake couldn't
76 distinguish which language they were speaking - were drunkenly singing chants while poorly
77 attempting to conceal their open beers. It turned out they were heading to the BDO Darts World
78 Championships final, at Alexandra Palace in North London.

79 “People travel to watch DARTS?!” exclaimed Sally, utterly astounded.

80 “It's a game for old men in bars, isn't it?” Carly asked one of the men standing near her.

81 “Not in Europe. It's one of the most popular events to attend live, and the world
82 championships get international TV coverage. Being world class at darts is one of the hardest
83 things to do in the world of sports. Think about the level of precision involved. It's an incredible
84 skill.” He appeared to be one of the few darts fans who was actually sober.

85 The students were astounded at the size of the crowd of fans going to watch darts.

86 “This would never happen in the U.S.,” muttered Sally.

87 Later, after the entire class met for their first welcome session and dinner at Nando's,
88 Jake and his three new friends went for a walk to explore the neighborhood. They came across a
89 large and noisy venue with people drinking beer outside of it. The red sign out front read, *The*
90 *Flying Horse*. Chaz instantly tried to get the group over there.

91 Sally seemed reluctant. “We're not 21,” she argued. “We shouldn't be drinking!”

92 Chaz retorted “Sally, the drinking age here is 18. Surely we should take advantage.”

93 The worry faded from Sally's face and with a growing smile said, "Oh... well then..."
94 and began crossing the street toward the pub.

95 "That place looks packed. It must be good," Jake chimed in as the group followed along.

96 The pub was a sea of red and standing room only. There was a huge projector screen
97 showing a soccer match. Everyone was huddled in a mass of humanity trying to both see the
98 game and not spill their drinks. Strangely, despite the fact they were all the fans wore red, it
99 looked as though some were cheering for the team in red and some for the team in white.

100 Jake read the confusion on his friends' faces, "It's Manchester United versus Liverpool
101 and they both have red colored home jerseys. And in soccer you say nil-nil for the score now."

102 "Soccer? You Yanks are a long way from home. It's football here" a man said from
103 behind them, "and not that padded rugby nonsense you guys have."

104 Chaz was about to reply when Jake cut him off, "Is this Champions League?"

105 Alan laughed. "No, son, this is the Premier League. Champions League is on a break
106 until February, besides, Man Utd aren't in it this year! It's fantastic. I'm Alan. Welcome to
107 London and no offence intended," he said to Chaz, "I know how hard American Football is."

108 Sally looked confused. "There are multiple tournaments at the same time?" she asked.

109 Alan smiled. "You've got the Premier League. That's your biggest English competition
110 with 38 league games, one against each team at home and one away."

111 "That means on the road," Chaz said, so low that Jake barely heard it. Chaz's face
112 showed that he also didn't approve of the strange words Alan was using to describe sports.

113 "That's the biggest prize in England," Alan continued. "The FA Cup is a big knockout
114 competition involving every club in the country, more than 700 this year."

115 "How can there be 700 teams in this country? It's so small!" said Carly.

116 “Well, each local area is fiercely proud, and they all have teams. There’s more than 20 in
117 London alone. And then you have the EFL Cup too. That’s a less important tournament that only
118 includes the 92 professional teams in the country. And then you have continental competitions in
119 Europe, like the Champions League and Europa League.” Alan’s explanations were very clear.

120 “Wait . . . So there’s like four different competitions all going on at the same time, don’t
121 you get confused?” asked Carly, clearly trying to wrap her head around it all.

122 Alan had a wry smile on his face. “No I can keep up with all of that, but truly, I’m a fan
123 of the mighty Hammers, West Ham United. They’ve been my club since I was a lad. As he said
124 this, he tugged at the claret and blue scarf around his neck, which Jake noticed had a hammer
125 emblem on it. “Tell you what, let me make up for the padded rugby comments and at the same
126 time show you what all the fuss is about. I’ve just spoken to a friend of mine this afternoon, and
127 he won’t be using his tickets for the game on Saturday. We’ve got Fulham at home in the 3rd
128 Round of the FA Cup. It’s a London derby - Fulham are from West London, so it’s a bit of a
129 rivalry game. Would you kids wanna come with me and see a game?”

130 Jake’s eyes lit up - he’d been dreaming of going to a soccer game in England since he
131 first heard of this class, but didn’t think it would happen this quickly! He looked at the others,
132 hoping for support, but Sally, ever the introvert, visibly shrank from the prospect of spending an
133 afternoon with a stranger, and Chaz was clearly still a bit sore from Alan’s comments about
134 American football. Carly however, broke their silence and leapt up in support of Jake.

135 “Oh yes please!” she exclaimed while beaming at Alan.

136 “Great!” He said, without really waiting for Chaz or Sally to respond positively. “Here,”
137 he reached inside his coat and handed them a business card with his phone number on it. “Text

138 me tomorrow and we'll arrange a place to meet! Nice to meet you all, looking forward to
139 Saturday!" And with that, he shook their hands and walked out of the pub.

140 Sitting in the Flying Horse that night as the crowd dwindled with the end of the game,
141 Jake felt comfortable, excited beyond belief, but also quite at home in this new world.

142 **Carly**

143 The orientation sessions began in earnest the following morning. Carly was pleasantly
144 surprised that instead of campy, ice-breaker sessions, orientation meant even more trips around
145 the city. As the group moved about the city, she noticed not only the historic landmarks, but the
146 amount of diversity on nearly every street. Carly was sensitive to this given her own background
147 in Placerville, California. Her mother grew up in San Francisco and was a proud member of the
148 Muwekma Ohlnoe tribe, and her father emigrated from Thailand in the 1970s when he was still
149 young. Carly inherited her mother's strong sense of cultural identity, coupled with her dad's
150 natural athleticism and fierce competitiveness. The eclectic, sometimes confusing mix that
151 resulted from London's place in the world continued to surprise and enchant her throughout the
152 semester. For her, the term "home team" grew to take on so many meanings in London.

153 That Saturday afternoon the four friends met Alan and boarded the 473 bus to the former
154 Olympic Stadium, which was now the home of West Ham United Football Club.

155 "This was built for the 2012 games," explained Alan. "The stadium was used for the
156 opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics & Paralympics, plus all the track and field
157 events. There was a big bidding war between various clubs and organizations about who would
158 take over the stadium following the games. Eventually, it was West Ham who beat Tottenham
159 Hotspur for the rights to call the Olympic Stadium home. Now they just call it the London
160 Stadium, West Ham have played here since August 2016."

161 As they got off the bus, they joined the masses of claret and blue clad fans walking
162 towards the stadium. On the other side of the road, divided from the home fans by a police
163 presence and some barricades, were the visiting fans from Fulham, who wore their white jerseys,
164 yet had almost to a man covered them up with the coats and jackets they were wearing on top.

165 The stadium was electric for this “London derby,” as Alan had described it. The pre-
166 match song *I’m Forever Blowing Bubbles* was something that Carly and Sally found hilarious
167 and enjoyable, while Chaz stated that it was very strange to have a fight-song equivalent about
168 bubbles. The game was fast-paced. West Ham raced to an early 2-0 lead, and the crowd’s
169 jubilation made the students feel right at home. The nearly full 60,000 all-seater stadium was
170 bouncing with emotion. Fulham pulled a goal back before half time, but West Ham’s superiority
171 and higher fitness levels told in the second half and they ran out eventual 4-1 winners and
172 progressed to the next round. After the game, Carly could see it in the eyes that her classmates,
173 except Chaz, were hooked as West Ham fans.

174 Alan was delighted. “What a great performance!” he exclaimed. “You guys picked a
175 good first game!”

176 Alan bid them farewell, but made them promise they’d stay in touch beginning with a
177 meetup at the pub the next Wednesday night, which, along with regular classes that began that
178 Monday, was one appointment they ended up keeping throughout the whole semester.

179 Late January revealed another side of London’s personality to Carly as the Australian
180 Open tennis tournament took place. Due to the 11-hour time difference between the U.K. and the
181 land down under it was difficult to keep track of what was going on. Most matches were played
182 while the students slept. Andy Murray, the current world number one and Scotland native was
183 tipped to win the championship. While tennis wasn’t really any of the students go-to sport, they

184 were all interested in what was happening, hoping to see a patriotic celebration of victory in the
185 U.K. if Murray came through. Murray went all the way to the semifinals, with a ground swell of
186 homeland support behind him. Social media was buzzing. The expectations were high that the
187 world number one would win another major tennis championship for Britain.

188 But things didn't go to plan. Murray was defeated by the Japanese sensation Kei
189 Nishikori. Carly was stunned to see the next morning's papers portraying him as a "Scottish
190 Failure." She gleaned that there was a significant disconnect between being "British" and being
191 "Scottish." Apparently, this was a common thing with athletes in the U.K., the cultural identity
192 between the four countries within the Kingdom being so varied and spread.

193 "It's like us calling a failed Olympian from Arizona 'an Arizonan' as opposed to an
194 American - and picking on them for not winning." Carly was particularly perturbed by this.
195 "Why does the entire country not cheer for everyone inside it?" she thought, strangely unsettled.

196 Later that semester, Carly decided to go exploring and took a different route through a
197 local park. She'd been unable to find a volleyball team to play on here, so needed some exercise.
198 She passed the basketball hoops, and the dangerous looking metal soccer goal frames that were
199 set into the hard concrete. She wondered how kids were allowed to play soccer on such an
200 unforgiving surface. Surely that led to injuries galore? As she continued, she noticed a group of
201 women wearing two different colored bibs. A few of the women on each team also wore a hijab.
202 They appeared to be throwing a ball to each other and then shooting it into a tall hoop, similar to
203 basketball, yet there was no backboard, and nobody was bouncing the ball.

204 One of the subs noticed Carly watching inquisitively and walked over to her and through
205 a thick Indian accent asked, "Do you want to join in?"

206 “Oh!” Carly was surprised, “No, I’ve just never seen this before and was interested to see
207 how it works,” she explained.

208 “Aha, your accent gives away why you’ve never seen this before. This is Netball. It’s
209 played in quite a few former-British Empire countries. Where in America are you from?” said
210 the friendly netballer.

211 “California. And we all play volleyball out there.”

212 “Oh wow, you’ll be fantastic at this. It’s all hand-eye coordination and movement. Why
213 don’t you join in? We’ll teach you! I’m Darsha by the way . . . and this is Annabel.”

214 And so Carly joined in. And she loved it. The rules were strange and she doubted she’d
215 ever been this confused in her life. But Carly had a blast. England had proven again to be a
216 complicated place. The divisions that had shaken her were wiped away while she played this
217 new, strenuous game with this group of women from around the world.

218 **Chaz**

219 February came and suddenly it was Super Bowl Sunday. While this surprise was
220 explainable for the other students, Chaz was the embodiment of the South Texas football
221 sporting experience. In high school he was a starting quarterback and seemed destined for an
222 NCAA Division I (DI) team when a knee injury slowed him down and landed him in a DIII
223 program. The changes in his athletic career allowed time for his naturally outgoing personality to
224 make him a significant figure at Rim Rock. He was elected President of the Black Student Union
225 and now worked as a tour guide for the university’s admissions department. There should have
226 been no way the single biggest date in the American sporting calendar should have snuck up on
227 him, but with minimal advertisement on only a few TV channels, it had. Chaz had to use Google

228 to find a place to watch the game. However, the game didn't start until almost midnight in
229 London!

230 Jake, Carli, and Sally knew they had a 9:00am class the next day. Without giving it much
231 thought, they all quickly decided that the Super Bowl, while significant in the U.S. wasn't worth
232 the late night. Chaz; however, wouldn't hear it and headed out to see the game. He returned just
233 before the sun came up the next morning. Unsurprisingly, it was a few days before the Chaz fully
234 recovered from his late night spent watching the Super Bowl, but eventually he settled back into
235 the usual routine.

236 It was a bit of a nothing Wednesday afternoon, and Sally and Chaz were walking back
237 towards their accommodation when suddenly Sally stopped in front of a peculiar looking shop.
238 The two unlikely friends had been hanging out a lot in the recent weeks, leading Jake and Carly
239 to hypothesize that they were almost certainly dating. The shop's blue logo said *William Hill* and
240 the posters in the window read, "West Ham to win 2-0, 12/1. £10 wins you £130." Chaz recalled
241 the locals called these *bookies*. Sally grabbed Chaz's hand and pulled him inside, proceeding
242 straight to the booth at the back like she'd been in this environment her entire life.

243 Sally smiled and waved to the attendant sitting in the booth. "Hi Dave!" she beamed.

244 "Hey there Sally," he answered in kind. She slid a white piece of paper underneath the
245 Perspex window. Dave took the paper, scanned it into his machine and said "another winner!
246 Have you lost one bet yet!?"

247 Sally laughed, "Yes I have Dave! A few, but I've just had some good results too!"

248 "Here you go love," said Dave, counting out what must've been ten to fifteen £20 notes.

249 “I’ll see you tomorrow, have to do my research on this weekend’s games!” And with that,
250 and a wave, Sally turned on her heel and strolled back past Chaz and out of the store. He was
251 incredulous and chased her down the street.

252 “Sally! What are you doing?!” Chaz was apoplectic.

253 “Blending in with the local culture. I’m not guessing. I’m using my analytics. It’s just a
254 little bit of fun.” Sally said with a smile.

255 “But gambling is illegal! And it can ruin your life.”

256 “It’s not illegal here.” She said, then added, “Surely we should take advantage.” And with
257 that she turned and strolled away.

258 Chaz just stared at her as she walked down the street. He thought, “Wow, this woman is
259 full of all kinds of surprises.”

260 Besides spending time with Sally, Chaz had been staying busy. He had rounded up a
261 group of other Americans studying in London for flag-football games and even some intense
262 practice sessions. He enjoyed throwing the football around with some guys who shared his
263 passion for the game. After one practice, the group headed to *The World’s End* pub near
264 Finsbury Park, to have a couple of drinks together. On the TV was a game of rugby. Chaz looked
265 up at the screen and saw the display said “ITA 7 - 14 FRA.”

266 “Italy vs France?!” questioned Chaz. “Why is anyone here watching these two teams?”

267 “Well, this is part of the *6 Nations* tournament. It’s England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales,
268 France, and Italy all competing to be champions. The outcome of the match might influence
269 England’s chances of winning. Also, with how diverse London is, you’ve got a ton of Irish,
270 Scottish, and Welsh people here too cheering for their own nations,” explained Chad, one of the
271 group who was working in London for nearly two years.

272 “And you like this?” Chaz asked curiously.

273 “Absolutely!” beamed Chad. “Don’t knock rugby. These guys are tough as nails too.

274 They only wear minimal padding under their shirts, which means almost all their hits are body

275 on body. No helmets either. American football and rugby are actually quite different in how

276 they’re played, but here you find a decent correlation between fans of both.”

277 Chad continued to explain how rugby was one of the biggest sports in the U.K. and

278 around the world too “There’s also a Premiership Rugby league, though it’s not as popular as

279 Premier League soccer is. Rugby is the real deal.”

280 Chaz had thought that life in Europe couldn’t possibly match the U.S., but with his

281 growing appreciation for rugby, and a woman like Sally around, Europe was feeling pretty good.

282 **Jake**

283 Late March brought a particularly special proposition for the students from Alan.

284 “Listen, he said excitedly, as they drank their pints in The Flying Horse, “how would you

285 guys feel about a trip to the seaside this weekend? It’s the FA Cup quarterfinals, and we’ve got

286 Brighton away. I’ve got some spare tickets. Fancy a trip to the beach and seeing another game?”

287 As Chaz scoffed, everyone else’s eyes lit up. The students had really taken supporting

288 West Ham seriously ever since their first game with Alan, and another opportunity to watch them

289 live, especially an away game, was not something they were going to pass up. Immediately, Alan

290 pulled out his phone and booked them all train tickets to Brighton and back on Saturday.

291 They arrived early in the morning at Brighton, to give them a chance to explore before

292 the 5:15pm kick-off at the Amex Stadium. They had fish and chips for lunch at Brighton pier -

293 something Jake loved and Carly was a little hesitant about, citing how everything was fried.

294 They then played some retro arcade games and left clutching a number of strange prizes. The sea

295 air and the difference between the Brighton and London style of life really struck the students, as
296 they realized that not all of England was like London.

297 The game itself was a fairly hot-tempered affair. An early red card for Brighton led to
298 two West Ham first half goals. Eventually, the Hammers ran out 3-1 winners.

299 When the group left the grounds, everything changed. Not only was the police presence
300 huge during the game, but after the game, they received an escort all the way back through the
301 town to the train station. The Brighton fans were incensed, feeling as though they'd been robbed
302 of their own semi-final dreams by the questionable refereeing decisions, and were attempting to
303 take their frustrations out on the away fans.

304 This was not without provocation, but Jake was unsettled by the numerous violent clashes
305 between the two sets of fans. He thought about how rival fans would regularly sit next to each
306 other in American sporting venues without incident. *Why is it different here?* he pondered.

307 On the train home, Alan found himself answering questions from Jake about the
308 problems with the crowds. "It used to be far worse," he began, "back in the 70s & 80s
309 hooliganism was a huge problem. Violence goes hand in hand with fans here at times. I tell you
310 what, you should watch *Green Street Hooligans*." It's a film about an American man coming to
311 London to visit his family and ending up involved in a West Ham hooligan gang. Thankfully, it's
312 really not like that anymore, but it's a great film and tells an interesting story."

313 Jake seemed taken aback by this whole development. "Why would you fight other fans?"

314 "Well I wouldn't!" smiled Alan, "I'd get my head caved in! But football matters hugely
315 to people here and local rivalries are fearsome. I'm sorry if today scared you guys, but trust me,
316 that's rare now. Just be glad you weren't visiting in the 80s. And we weren't playing Millwall!"

317 Jake’s appreciation for the European life became a little more complicated as he thought
318 about its violent history around sport.

319 **Sally**

320 As April began, London started to get warmer, yet the rain didn’t let up. Thankfully, this
321 particular weekend was sunny, which allowed Sally and Chaz to take a leisurely stroll while
322 looking for a pub to eat lunch. Sally suddenly decided that she’d found the exact place she
323 wanted to be. Although her curiosity to see the world had taken her first to Texas for school and
324 now to the other side of the world, Sally was still very much the bookish, introverted person
325 from Las Cruces, New Mexico. With Chaz, Carly, and Jake, she had seen and discussed more
326 sport in the past few months than in years before that. Only weeks before the class had Sally seen
327 “Moneyball” and immediately became intrigued by predicting performance based on cold, hard
328 numbers. Sally wasn’t quite sure that her newly developed decisiveness would survive the trip
329 back to the US but she was determined to enjoy it here in London.

330 “What is going on Sally? Why here?” Chaz asked.

331 “They have great food,” she responded quickly before pausing and saying, “and they’re
332 showing the Grand National on a big screen!” Realization spread on Chaz’s face. Together they
333 had seen a story on the news this morning about the Grand National, which was kind of like the
334 U.K.’s Kentucky Derby. Even then Chaz had clearly shown no interest in horse racing.

335 “Why didn’t you just bring Carly with you?!” he asked.

336 “You are better company and she thinks animal racing is cruel,” Sally looked at him,
337 making her eyes as big and beautiful as possible.

338 Chaz’s resistance faded, “Alright, let’s get some food and watch the race.”

339 Sally instantly whipped out what appeared to be a year's worth of betting slips and
340 quickly explained these were just her 15 single bets she had placed on today's race. The pub was
341 buzzing with excitement, as the biggest race of the calendar year was about to get underway.
342 There were a few falls at the first two fences, including wiping out Sally's favorite horse. In the
343 end, *One for Arthur* won, which frustrated Sally to no end. He had not been tipped in any of her
344 research. Sally thought, "Maybe numbers can't predict everything."

345 Later in the spring, Sally and Carly were out for lunch at a sandwich place in Regent's
346 Park. They paid for their food and turned around to look for somewhere to sit. The place was
347 packed and the only real space was at a four person table where an older man was eating alone.
348 He graciously asked them to join him.

349 "My name's Jim," he said. "I'm 84 years young" he chuckled with a much younger feel
350 to him than his age. "The table is yours as I'll be headed back to my cricket match after lunch."

351 "Cricket?!" exclaimed Sally. She'd heard much about this strange sport that was mainly
352 played in the old British Empire countries yet had absolutely no idea how it was played.

353 "Aren't you missing the game by having lunch here?" asked Carly.

354 "Absolutely not!" he said. "They have a lunch break too! Also, this is only day two of
355 five so there's plenty more to see this week!"

356 Sally and Carly looked at each other with wild confusion in their eyes. "The game lasts
357 five days?" asked Carly.

358 "Well, it depends on the format of the game, but international test series matches are five
359 days long yes, though they might end early if both teams get out quicker than that!"

360 “Tell you what,” continued Jim, “I’ve got a lifetime membership at Lord’s. I’m sure we
361 can get you two a couple of cheap tickets for the rest of the day. Would you be interested in
362 accompanying me?”

363 They agreed and set off back to Lord’s Cricket Ground. The vibe of this sport was unlike
364 anything Sally or Carly had ever encountered. England were playing Bangladesh. In the majority
365 English crowd small pockets of Bangladeshi supporters made a good amount of noise. Carly
366 hypothesized they were most definitely middle or upper class on average - applauding politely
367 while continuing to drink their fruity alcoholic drinks. The two men holding bats ran back and
368 forth, and seemed to continue to hit the ball until they were out. This could mean they were out
369 there for two minutes or six hours. And every six balls they changed the end the ball was being
370 thrown from.

371 “What a strange sport,” thought Sally who said, “It’s like an English baseball game.”

372 Jim thought for a moment and said “we don’t have the baseball thingy here. My
373 grandkids play rounders at school, which is a bit similar. It’s played with a much shorter bat that
374 you hold in one hand and the ball is always thrown underarm. Cricket, however, is the purest of
375 sports in the U.K. It’s a massive throwback to the Empire and really takes over the country in the
376 summer. Especially if England are playing Australia -- and even more so if they’re winning!”
377 They watched the rest of the day’s play intently, including staying through the tea break, and left
378 at about 6:30 p.m., with the score apparently England 451, Bangladesh 207 for 9.

379 Sally and Carly were completely enthralled with a new favorite game; a game unlike any
380 they had experienced, yet familiar at the same time.

381 The following Sunday afternoon meant one thing for the students. FA Cup semifinal day.
382 They met Alan in The Flying Horse and got their usual table right in front of the big screen. Sally

383 and the rest were all wearing their claret and blue scarves, despite it definitely being too hot to
384 wear a scarf for any other reason. It was a revenge mission for West Ham, as they were facing
385 Liverpool, the side who had defeated them in the final of 2006. There was a sizeable group of
386 Liverpool fans in the pub, but the lack of a local rivalry between the two teams meant that both
387 sets of fans seemed to be mingling together and getting on fairly well, despite the high stakes.

388 After 90-minutes, the game was still scoreless. Chances had been at a premium and it had
389 actually been quite a boring match, perhaps due to neither team wanting to lose, as opposed to
390 being willing to take the appropriate risks to win. The game went to penalties. Sally hadn't ever
391 seen a penalty shootout before, only knowing how a shootout worked in ice hockey. The drama
392 and tension were unbelievable. She clutched Carly's hand as they held their breath waiting for
393 the final shots. The score was 3-3 with one penalty each left.

394 Liverpool's Mo Salah would take its final penalty. A goal would leave West Ham
395 needing to score to remain alive. A miss would mean West Ham were on the brink of the Cup
396 final. The pub settled into almost silent tension. Prayers were said and fingers were crossed.
397 Salah struck the ball with power, but it travelled upwards and hit the crossbar. He missed. This
398 was now West Ham's chance. Alan had his head buried in his lap and was visibly shaking with
399 nerves. Sally looked at each of the others and noticed right away that each felt just as nervous.
400 The referee blew his whistle, and Marko Arnautovic blasted it straight down the middle. West
401 Ham had won 4-3. They were in the FA Cup final. The pub was a sea of joy. Beer flew
402 everywhere. Sally and the other students were soaked, but didn't care in the slightest.

403 Before coming to London, it had been rare for Sally to express pure joy. Those moments
404 were happening quite frequently this semester. She looked at her friends leaping around and
405 hugging, droplets of beer flying off them. She never felt happier.

406 Alan was openly weeping. His Hammers were in the FA Cup final! At once he felt like a
407 little boy and an old man; tired and boisterous at the same time. “We are going to Wembley!” He
408 looked intently at each of them until they understood. “You four are West Ham’s lucky charms. I
409 know it. We are all going to the Final.” Alan wouldn’t hear of any different plan.

410 And so that was that. When the day came, they arranged to meet at noon, and grabbed a
411 quick lunch before making their way towards Wembley before kickoff. Sally had made her
412 pregame ritual visit to *William Hill* and had her chat with Dave. “£10 on 2-1 to West Ham,”
413 she’d cheerfully told Dave behind the desk, “But that’s my heart talking and not my head!” she
414 admitted.

415 West Ham were definitive outsiders against the powerhouse of North London football.
416 With a 60,000 all-seater state-of-the-art stadium and millions of fans across the world, Arsenal
417 were one of the most recognizable brands in the sports world.

418 The beauty of Wembley Stadium took the students aback. Walking down the iconic
419 Wembley Way, the arch on the roof of the stadium loomed large as the sun shone bright in the
420 sky. The students had been surprised by how cheap their match tickets had been. Kick off was at
421 3:00 p.m., the traditional kick off time for soccer in England, and yet the stadium was almost
422 entirely full an hour before the start! The roar of the crowd that greeted the players when they
423 jogged out to warm up could have signified a win in other sports. The passion was unlike
424 anything Carly had ever seen before.

425 The game was a war from the first kick to the last. West Ham tried desperately to chase
426 and harass their opponents into mistakes, but Arsenal were calm on the ball and maintained
427 possession for much of the first half. The half ended with Arsenal leading 1-0. The West Ham
428 fans tried to urge their team back into the game, and were rewarded just 8-minutes into the

429 second half. A West Ham corner was powered home for the equalizer! Pandemonium. The
430 students themselves failed to control themselves with even typically timid Sally jumping up and
431 down for joy, while Jake, Carly, and Alan were hugging everyone and waving their scarves in
432 the air. The next half an hour or so was tense, as both sides sought a winning goal.

433 There were only 3-minutes to go when the referee awarded a corner to Arsenal. The ball
434 rifled off the crossbar and in the confusion Arsenal's number 14 went down at the penalty box
435 over West Ham number 5's outstretched leg. The Arsenal fans went wild, imploring the referee
436 to make the decision; 90,000 eyes turned on one man in black. He blew his whistle. Penalty to
437 Arsenal. Alan had his head in his hands. "Definite penalty," he said. "I don't believe it."

438 Alexandre Lacazette, grabbed the ball, placed it on the spot, and strolled back, before
439 turning to face to the goal with his hands on his hips. He looked relaxed. The referee blew his
440 whistle, as the stadium descended into a hushed silence. Lacazette struck the ball to the
441 goalkeeper's right and it looked destined for the bottom corner of the net. Until, at the last
442 second, West Ham's goalkeeper, stretched out his hand and palmed it away.

443 A West Ham defender swung his leg at the ball and cleared it out to the left, where the
444 speedy West Ham number 3 raced into the Arsenal half. The counter attack was on. Number 3
445 chipped the ball to the back post, where Arnautovic was arriving. Arsenal's goalkeeper flew out
446 to meet him, but Arnautovic's strike hit the back of the net.

447 The eruption of noise and joy was unlike anything the students had ever experienced. The
448 *Wembley Roar*, famous throughout the world of soccer, had rarely been this loud. Fans jumped
449 and screamed like a rabid pack of animals; this was just unadulterated joy.

450 "And I won my bet! 2-1!" laughed Sally and she hugged Alan.

451 None of them could hide their delight. Alan was in tears. Full on, streaming down the
452 cheek, sobbing uncontrollable tears. What a sight. West Ham were FA Cup winners. The stadium
453 was awash with noise and color on one side, and absolute desolation and despair on the other.
454 Arsenal fans, eyes filled with tears, began filing out before the final whistle had even sounded.

455 The trophy presentation was the final cherry on the top of the cake. As the West Ham
456 captain lifted the trophy from the Wembley balcony, confetti cannons exploded all around the
457 stadium. As the champagne began to spray, the students felt a strange sense of achievement.
458 While they hadn't done anything to win the trophy, it felt like a triumph for them nonetheless. It
459 was almost an embodiment of their success in assimilating into the sporting culture of London so
460 seamlessly.

461 *When Dom finished reading the reflections, he stared at Mary, waiting for her reaction.*
462 *She asked, "So before I say anything, what is your question?"*

463 *Dr. Morris took a long, measured breath before he finally asked, "Was it worth it? Was*
464 *the semester worth the time and money?"*

465 *He stood and began to pace again, "Was my hands-off design the right approach? Did*
466 *the students get the most out of the experience?"*

467 *Dr. Villareal smiled as she opened her laptop. "Dom, your instincts are spot on. In fact,*
468 *the Dean has those very same questions. I just spoke with him not five minutes before you came*
469 *in and he has required that we defend the program's structure and outcomes later this week. The*
470 *future of your program will depend on it."* She paused a moment to let that sink in.

471 *"I suggest that we start with the AAC&U Global Learning rubric."* She rotated the
472 laptop so Dom could see the screen and continued, *"Okay, let's start by looking at how well you*
473 *think your students demonstrated the 'Cultural Diversity' value."*