

Learning from London: ASU business students get experience in a top sports market

From Wembley to Wrexham, summer study abroad trip provided a firsthand look at the sports industry in the UK

By Molly Loonam, ASU News
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Since lacing up her first pair of cleats at age 3, [Brianna Lucey](#) has dreamed of a career in soccer.

"I played at nearly every level and always wanted to experience football in England. I grew up watching every season — even the games that aired at 4 a.m.," she said.

When an injury forced her into early retirement, Lucey redirected her passion toward the business of sports, setting her sights on a career with the English Premier League. But the path felt far-fetched — until she took part in a recent sports business study abroad trip to London.

"It shifted my thinking about my career goals. What I used to think was a reach, I now see it as my reality."

Lucey was one of 15 sports business students from Arizona State University's W. P. Carey School of Business who spent eight days exploring London's sports industry through stadium tours, meetings with club executives and hands-on marketing challenges.

The second annual program was organized and led by [Ryan Kota](#), a clinical assistant professor of marketing, and is already scheduled to return next spring.

"As ASU continues to grow its global reach and impact, we believe it is imperative to provide opportunities for our students to become globally minded," said Kota, whose colleagues have led similar sports business experiences in Madrid and at the [Paris](#) and [Milan](#) Olympics.

"This trip was designed to immerse students in one of the world's premier sports cities while helping them grow personally and professionally."

For Lucey, the experience was an invaluable lesson in how deeply sports intertwine with British culture and community.

"From the pitch to behind the scenes," she said, "every visit gave me a perspective on this industry that no classroom could ever replicate."

Inside one of the world's premier sports markets

Students explored London's East and West ends, attended Women's Super League and Premier League matches, and visited Tottenham Hotspur, Brentford, Milton Keynes Dons F.C., Wembley Stadium, Wimbledon and Wrexham A.F.C.

Along the way, they met with the executives and teams responsible for stadium operations, sponsorships and branding.

An unexpected highlight came as the group entered Wembley Stadium, where they spotted a Sun Devil Athletics advertisement promoting [ASU's upcoming Union Jack Classic game](#).

"Seeing ASU promoted at one of the most iconic venues in London made us feel like Sun Devils belong in this great city," Kota said.

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Although [Jackson Woods](#) grew up traveling between England and the U.S. to visit family, experiencing the country through the lens of sports business gave him a new appreciation for the industry.

"It was a great experience, especially for the students interested in sports marketing and global brand strategy," Woods said.

He particularly enjoyed watching his classmates experience English football culture firsthand.

"The way the fans go crazy — we don't really have that in America."

While touring Brentford, students learned how the club's marketing team manages sponsorships, branding, match-day operations and community initiatives. For [Raef Burhoe](#), the visit highlighted the unique role sports play in British communities.

"It's about community, unity and supporting something bigger than yourself," he said.

Throughout the trip, students worked in teams to develop marketing strategies for the [Tottenham Hotspur Foundation](#). Their challenge was to create a campaign that would increase participation among 13- to 24-year-olds over the next two years by identifying barriers to engagement, defining target audiences and proposing engagement strategies within a set budget. The project culminated in formal presentations to the foundation's marketing team.

Woods' group focused on building stronger communities, lives and futures through youth programs and partnerships that highlighted accessibility and inclusion.

Burhoe said the project challenged his team's sports business knowledge and encouraged them to think creatively. It also reinforced the role sports play in building community, especially in places like Wrexham. Wrexham A.F.C. is Wales' oldest football club and was purchased in 2021 by entertainers Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney., where the club and the community are closely intertwined.

"It simply means more to be a fan across the pond. It's a different kind of passion and loyalty you don't see in the United States; everyone leans on each other to support their club," he said.

New perspective, bigger ambitions

Like the thousands of ASU students who study abroad each year, Lucey, Woods and Burhoe returned with more than fond memories and new perspectives — they returned with bigger career ambitions.

"Experiencing any study abroad trip, no matter its length, is a vital component of personal growth in and out of the classroom," Lucey said.

Burhoe agrees.

"Being a part of real communities, cultures and environments gives you a unique perspective that cannot be obtained any other way," Burhoe said. "It challenges the typical classroom setting by allowing students to customize their experience, dive deeper into meaningful topics and engage in communities other than our own."

The experience also reshaped how each student envisions a future in sports.

Burhoe returned inspired to dream bigger about his career. Woods discovered an interest in sponsorship while gaining a deeper appreciation for sustainability's role in major sporting events. Meanwhile, Lucey no longer sees working for the English Premier League as out of reach.

"This trip helped other students — whether they're interested in working in England or not — understand the opportunities available to them," Woods said.

For Kota, the most rewarding part of the trip was watching students embrace every opportunity offered.

"London is a great city," he said, "and it always makes me smile knowing that we have more Sun Devils who are prepared to be leaders across the pond."

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

¹ Wrexham A.F.C. is Wales' oldest football club and was purchased in 2021 by entertainers Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney.

Main image



Fifteen W. P. Carey students spent eight days exploring London's sports industry through stadium tours, meetings with club executives and hands-on marketing challenges. Courtesy photo

Gallery



Raef Burhoe at Wembley Stadium.



Brianna Lucey (second from the right) with classmates at Stamford Bridge.



Jackson Woods in the Wembley locker room.



The group poses in the Wembley locker room.



The group poses outside of Wrexham stadium in Wales.