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Final Project Script

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OPEN: *sounds of EPL crowds at a game*

NARRATION: English soccer is rowdy. The stadiums are filled to the brim with soccer fans who would put American college football and NFL fans to shame. They're loud, passionate, and usually quite drunk. Sometimes they become brothers with the stranger in the seat next to them, and then sometimes brawls break out. There's a reason they're called hooligans. And with anything this popular, the money will follow. In the 2015-16 season, the English Premier League generated 4.8 billion dollars in revenue, the 4th highest of all the major professional sports leagues in the world. With an industry that big, it's warranted attention from business and economic intellectuals, including Linfield College's department of economics, which every other year offers a study abroad course called "Economics of Association Football in the U.K." during the school's month long January Term. The course is taught by Linfield Professor of Economics Dr. Randy Grant, who specializes in sports economics.

GRANT: I had been teaching a course to Australia, but my guide was retiring, and so after he retired, it was like, "okay what's next?" So, as that was looming closer, I came up with this idea of, "what about, ya know, English football?" I had done Jan-term trips to England before, for the industrial revolution, but I figured "why not English football?" And I floated the idea among students and they seemed really interested.

NARRATION: It's a jam-packed expedition, with travel all over England.

GRANT: Three weeks, week in Manchester, three days in Bedford, at the University of Bedfordshire, 3 days in Cambridge, including talks with FC Cambridge, and a week in London. And it's a mix of matches and stadium tours and classroom sessions with professors from there that have expertise in that particular industry, meetings with team execs, kind of a wide range of exposure to English football.

NARRATION: One of the students on the trip is Graeme Fineman, a junior history major at Linfield college. Throughout Fineman's teenage and college years, he became a soccer fanatic. First following international soccer, then the MLS, and finally the Premier League, where he latched onto his favorite club, Everton F.C.

MUSIC: *Everton club anthem begins to play, fades out as Graeme continues talking*

FINEMAN: They had Tim Howard, which is huge, because, ya know, there's not that many U.S. soccer players abroad, so he was cool, and through that, through Tim Howard, learned about Layton Banes, who's the captain and left back, and I just loved Layton Banes. The idea that Everton is the "working man's club," ya know, not supposed to win the whole thing ever, don't have a lot of money.

NARRATION: Although he already knew a lot about the club, this course has allowed him to research and find out more about his favorite team, as he has spent the semester leading up to the trip researching the business side of things.

FINEMAN: I know most, if not all, the players, the coaching staff, how they do... on the field. The cool thing about this class and what I got to do some research on is the economic side of it, the money side of it. I've always known that Everton is not the richest club, but not the poorest club, they're probably the richest of the middle class. But actually kind of seeing the numbers and seeing just more the economic aspects of it, is what I really got a lot out of. Because like I said, I knew the players, knew, the coaches but finally learning more of the economic side of it.

NARRATION: But not everyone on the trip is a soccer fanatic like Fineman. Tyler Kelsch, a junior Accounting major, is taking the course as a way to learn about a sport that has piqued his curiosity.

TYLER KELSCH: I had a little bit of an interest, it was something that I wanted to get more interest in. Started paying more attention to soccer probably in high school, kinda as US soccer grew in popularity in the World Cup and the Olympics and things like that. And then coming to college, making some friends who were interested in soccer and definitely helped, and so this course kind of hit that for me, where I can learn more about soccer, as well as study econ which is kind of a subset of a lot of my interests.

NARRATION: For his club study for the course, Kelsch unknowingly picked an un-popular team.

MUSIC: *Man City anthem "Blue Moon" begins to play, fades out as Tyler begins to talk.*

KELSCH: My club is Manchester City, which I didn't know a lot of people hated. I've gotten a lot of heat through the course whenever Manchester City gets brought up... but I guess I kinda like them now. I learned that my club was bad for a long time, they got bought by Arabian oil owners, and they dumped a ton of money into the club and now they're really good. They hit some penalties and stuff through that, which I thought was interesting. I've just been kind of almost overwhelmed almost with the amount of soccer knowledge I've absorbed between Champions League and Euros and the Premier League and then the other European leagues like the Spanish and the Italian and those types of things and how it all fits together especially in correlation with the World Cup and the Olympics and then kind of back to U.S. soccer as well.

NARRATION: And that's what Dr. Grant exactly intends for his course to do; for the students to absorb a copious amount of soccer knowledge, and be able to look at what's going on beyond the pitch.

GRANT: They take something that they've watched for a long time as a fan, if not English football specifically, soccer in general, or sports in general, and they get a greater appreciation for the economic dimensions to it. They get a much greater sense for how economics can be applied in a lot of different area, and how what they see on the TV screen or at a live match,

there's so much more behind it that going in they don't appreciate, but they really do after they're done.

NARRATION: But, Grant says that learning all this is a two-sided coin.

GRANT: On the one hand, they gain a greater appreciation for it, on the other hand, in some ways it almost taints the experience, because there's ya know, something about sort of pure enjoyment as a fan, but then when you see the dark side to things, and it's ya know, the economics isn't just the dark side stuff, but ya know, you see some negative aspects to it. I wouldn't say it ruins the experience, I think overall it enhances it, but there are some aspects where you might look at it and it might be a little tainted.

NARRATION: Linfield College's Jan-term courses, like this one, shows that there's more than one way to learn, and this way is hopping the pond, to enjoy some footy, with some hooligans.

CLOSE: *God Save The Queen*, begins to play under narration, plays, fades out to end piece.