

Roehampton Diaries:
Sports Fanatics in the UK
By Katherine Szabo and Arielle Anthony

Katherine Szabo: Half the reason I was so excited to come to the UK was for the sports, especially the football, or soccer as those in the United States call it. I was so looking forward to being a part of the singing, chanting, screaming and celebrating that goes on at the matches! Once I got my first taste of English football a few years back, I was hooked and wanted to go to a real match so badly. As soon as I got my chance to get tickets to a Premier League match, I jumped on it.

It turned out that two weeks after I arrived in London, the Fulham FC (which stands for football club), which happens to be close to the university, was hosting one of my favorite teams, West Ham United. I'm a diehard Manchester United supporter, but West Ham was another team that I've supported. It was good enough for me! I was really glad that Arielle had agreed to come along with me, because I knew that it was going to be a lot of fun.

I donned my West Ham scarf and we went down to try to find the park, which was not easy. But we had a lot of help from other football fans and made it there eventually. Seeing all of the fans on their way to the park was so exciting and I really felt like I was a part of something, even moreso once the match got under way. I love all of the enthusiasm and camaraderie that goes on during the matches. Even though we were out of our seats buying food when both of West Ham's goals were scored, everyone else who was down there with us were cheering, celebrating and congratulating each other. It was such a fun experience, especially because West Ham won!

Arielle Anthony: I've always been more interested in the fans and the effects that sports have on people's lives than the actual games, although I do enjoy watching a good game every once in a while. As someone who only knows sports from watching, not playing, the experience I've had in the UK was definitely the best I've ever had with sports. When I went to my very first football match, I was surprised to find how dedicated the fans were to their teams. I went with Katherine to a match at Fulham, I felt so happy that Katherine's team had won, especially because the fans were so enthusiastic about the West Ham team.

I really found it amusing that each football team has its own chants and songs made for the team. There was a time when we were on the train going to West Ham for the match and all of the fans were singing the songs for their team, loudly enough that it could be heard throughout the train. It was amazing to see people, some of whom had probably never met before, come together to go to a match. If a game has been scheduled, it's also wonderful to see how the pubs are packed so full with fans that we could hardly move with all the people inside cheering for their teams. The fanfare here is unlike anything I've ever seen before. It's really something that is special to the UK.