

Sport Business in Europe Reflection Paper

by Cameron Tackett

Participating in the five-week Texas A&M Germany Sport Business study abroad program was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that has changed my life forever. It not only broadened my understanding of Sport Management but also opened my eyes to new cultures, perspectives, and ways of thinking. From engaging in enriching academic discussions and site visits, to immersing myself in the daily life of European cities, this program offered me a unique and invaluable opportunity to learn outside of a traditional classroom setting.

One of the most academically enriching experiences of the program was the visit to the Nürburgring, a world-famous racetrack in Germany. This site visit allowed me to gain insights into the European sports industry, specifically the management and operations of motorsports events. In a classroom setting, I might have learned about the business side of motorsports through case studies, but physically being there gave me a different level of understanding. Seeing the infrastructure, from the track to the media rooms, and learning about the behind-the-scenes operations provided a concrete picture of how such facilities are managed at an elite level. Additionally, interacting with professionals at the Nürburgring helped me better understand the challenges they face, such as maintaining the historic value of the track while also modernizing it to meet safety standards. This hands-on experience reinforced the importance of balancing tradition with innovation, a lesson that applies not just to racing but to all sectors of sports management.

Another standout academic experience was the stadium and facility tour of FC Bayern Munich, one of the most successful football (soccer to all of my American readers) clubs in the world. Visiting Allianz Arena, the home of FC Bayern Munich, was nothing short of jaw-dropping. The state-of-the-art stadium is one that rivals Kyle Field, and the tour highlighted the business side of running a top-tier football club. From the locker rooms to the VIP areas, every aspect of the stadium is meticulously planned to enhance both the player and fan experience. Learning about the club's marketing strategies, international reach, and sponsorship deals deepened my understanding of the global sports industry and gave me insight into the complexities of managing a club of this scale. The visit to Allianz Arena also emphasized the importance of fan engagement and loyalty, concepts that will undoubtedly be important in my future career in sports management. While classroom lectures might have taught me the theory behind these practices, seeing them implemented in real life added a whole new dimension to my learning.

In addition to these two experiences, the visit to Adidas headquarters in Herzogenaurach was another highlight of the program. Adidas is one of the largest and most recognizable brands in sportswear and is notable to us here at Texas A&M. The team there provided us with a fascinating look into the intersection of sports, marketing, and global business. Touring the Adidas campus, I was struck by how much the company values innovation and sustainability. One of the things we learned about was Adidas' efforts to reduce its environmental footprint through sustainable materials and production processes. The visit gave me a new appreciation for the importance of corporate responsibility in the sports industry and how global companies are balancing profitability with sustainability. Additionally, the discussions with Adidas workers about the company's global marketing strategies, particularly in emerging markets, expanded my understanding of the challenges and opportunities involved in growing a global brand. This visit made me consider how I can integrate these values of innovation and sustainability into my future career in sports management.

Beyond the academic experiences, the cultural immersion aspect of the program was incredibly impactful. Living with a host family in Bonn and traveling through various cities in Germany and Austria allowed me to experience European culture firsthand, something I could never have fully grasped in a

traditional classroom setting. For instance, I had to adapt my communication style when interacting with people in a non-English-speaking environment. Whether it was ordering food, asking for directions, or engaging in conversations with locals, I had to be mindful of cultural differences and language barriers.

The cultural experience that had the most profound impact on me was the visit to Salzburg, Austria. Walking through the historic city and visiting landmarks such as Mozart's birthplace and the Hohensalzburg Fortress gave me a deeper appreciation for European history and its influence on contemporary culture. It also made me more curious about how historical contexts shape the sports industry in different countries. For example, Austria's rich history in winter sports, particularly skiing, is deeply rooted in its geography and culture, which is something I became more aware of during our excursion to Innsbruck, a city known for hosting the Winter Olympics and World Championship ski jumping. This cultural immersion increased my curiosity about how sports management practices differ across countries and how I can apply these lessons to my future career, especially if I work with international clients or organizations.

The program has had a lasting impact on my life and career aspirations. First and foremost, it has made me more globally aware and curious about international sports management practices. Before this program, my focus was largely on the U.S. sports industry, but now I find myself thinking more globally as this program has sparked my interest in pursuing opportunities abroad. I am now more open to the idea of working internationally, whether that be in Europe or another region. The skills I gained from navigating cultural differences, adapting to new environments, and understanding the global sports market have made me more confident in my ability to work in diverse and dynamic settings. The program has also motivated me to continue learning about other cultures and international issues, not just in sports management but in other aspects of life as well. It has instilled in me a sense of curiosity that will undoubtedly influence my future professional and personal decisions.

For any student considering this program, I would strongly encourage them to take advantage of every opportunity it offers. The academic site visits, such as those to the Nürburgring, FC Bayern Munich, and Adidas headquarters, provide invaluable hands-on learning experiences that you simply cannot get in a traditional classroom setting. Additionally, the cultural immersion aspect of the program is just as important as the academic component. Living in another country, even for a short period of time, challenges you to step out of your comfort zone and grow in ways you never expected. This program will not only expand your knowledge of sports management but also broaden your understanding of the world, which is an essential quality in today's globalized society.

Participating in the five-week Texas A&M Germany Sport Business study abroad program was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that has changed my life forever. It has expanded my academic knowledge, deepened my cultural awareness, and inspired me to think more globally about my future career in sports management. The cultural immersion experiences have made me more adaptable and curious about the world. As I move forward in my life and career, I will carry these lessons with me and continue to seek out opportunities for growth and learning, both at home and abroad.