



Outwood Academy City Barcelona Tour: 9 – 13 April 2018

An excited bunch of football estrellas (*Spanish translation: stars*) met at Outwood Academy City early on Monday afternoon, eager for their trip to the home of one of the world's greatest football teams, Barcelona (Mr Colliver still insists we should have just visited Bramall Lane). Suitcases and students loaded onto the bus we set off to sunny Spain via Liverpool Airport. We arrived at our hotel in Calella just after midnight, met with our guide Yolanda and headed off to bed ready to find out what the next day entailed.

After a delightful breakfast, we wandered along the beach to our first stop, training with local side CF Calella. Their expert coaching session was a great way to introduce the students to the Spanish style of football they were going to experience later in the week. Next call was the beach. A beach football tournament and heated volleyball match soon took place, with many arguments between Mr Sheehan and Mr Tittcomb. The students then showered, changed, ate and headed out to a local sports café to watch some Champions League football, which unfortunately saw our hosts dumped out by Roma. Off to bed (much quicker this time) as we were up early for our first taste of the Camp Nou.

We arrived in a rather damp Barcelona, at around 9:30am, where the students were introduced to the highly qualified Barcelona coaches. By the time the students had changed, the weather had perked up and we headed to our training pitches in the shadows of the magnificent Camp Nou; a truly inspirational setting to play football. The students threw themselves into the training drills and absorbed the Barca style of play. A quick lunch and back out into the Spanish sunshine for an afternoon session. The students were an absolute credit to themselves and the academy in their performances. We then headed back to Calella, for an evening of crazy golf and bowling. The excellent sporting performances weren't just left on the football pitch, as Louis Zuen smashed the Calella bowling alley record.

On the Thursday we arrived back at the Camp Nou for our final training session. The students were exceptional in the game situations. Their Catalan coaches had taught them some new Spanish phrases and every session finished with a rousing rendition from each group. The students were awarded certificates from the coaches then we headed off to our first fixture.

Our first fixtures were against Coeshia Major, a team from inner city Barcelona. The first game between them and a mixed Year 10 and 11 team was a classic. After a positive start, the City lads found themselves 4-0 down thanks to some wonderful play from our opposition, but a penalty from Alex Needham, two goals from Jack Mosely and one from Ethan Hussain pulled the game back to 4-4. The game then swung again as Coeshia edged 5-4 ahead before Nathan Hunt swept home to make it 5-5. To penalties it went. There were misses from both sides, leaving the scores at 2-2 with Ethan Hussain taking the last penalty, which he duly dispatched. There were amazing scenes as every Outwood Academy City student ran to celebrate with the Under 16s; a moment that encapsulated the amazing spirit of the group. The next game was between our girls' team and Coeshia's ladies team. The girls equipped themselves amazingly against the physically larger Catalan side. The girls played exceptionally, again drawing with their Spanish opponents, this time 3-3. So we went to penalties again. Hannah Shaw kept her nerve to give her side a superb penalty victory.

We then moved to our next opponents FC Parot, where the Year 8 team took on a group of academy players. The Spanish team had exceptional skills on the ball and made it very difficult for the Year 8s. A highlight from this game was Chris Steer's excellent finish after he sprung the offside trap to score a beautiful lob. However, the boys were soundly beaten. The best performance was saved for last, as the Under 14s took to the field. The atmosphere created by the supported students was electric and really encouraged the Year 9s. They played some scintillating football that even the Barcelona coaches would have been proud of. Man of the match Dylan Green who scored twice, as did Jack Hobson and Louie Walker added a fifth, in a



5-1 win. Magic moment of the game had to be Dylan Green's pass for Jack Hobson which would not have been out of place on the Camp Nou pitch.

The final day had arrived, and after packing our bags we headed for one final walk around our home for the week, Calella. We boarded the bus to Barcelona, taking in the delights of the Olympic stadium, and its incredible views over the magnificent Catalan city. Then we headed to the Camp Nou. After a short awards ceremony, where students were awarded money to spend in the FC Barcelona megastore, we headed in for some retail therapy. We then entered the Camp Nou through the museum, with the students amazed by the trophies, shirts and boots of Barcelona legends past and present. We then headed down the tunnel and onto the Barcelona pitch. A truly magnificent sight. The students spent an hour wandering around the Camp Nou before we had to leave Barcelona for the final time. After a slight delayed flight home, we arrived back at the academy at about 4am on Saturday morning.

The students were an absolute credit to themselves, their families and the academy. The staff who attended the trip could not have asked for more from them in terms of effort and attitude. They will have memories and friends to last a lifetime.

Som un equip? Si! Som un equip? Si! Som un equip? Si! Si! Si! BARCA!

Mr A Carruthers