



# THE ENGLISH FOOTBALL EXPERIENCE

"Huber to Holzmann, Holzmann to Meixner, Meixner to Wanke, Wanke, still Wanke - Gooooaaalllllllll!! He sinks it!!" That's how a sports commentator might sound like on the radio, shouting into his microphone when commentating on a match at the Fulham FC training ground in Southwest London.

The "Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe" or Secondary Commercial College from Vienna is the first school in Austria who took the opportunity train with London's oldest professional football club. In cooperation with Mark Heather, owner of MHC Training, a language school in Austria, Fulham FC offers week-long trips combining language courses and sports training - with football raising the passion.

Mark Heather: a laid back *Native Speaker* from Southampton explains his concept: "Here in London, students can learn English in a playful manner." School days are split into two - each morning is filled with two hours of English training, afternoons two-three hour football training. Evenings can be spent swimming, climbing or just relaxing.



**Really surprising:** The young guys from Vienna are fully focused in the classroom. Their teacher, a Fulham employee, has prepared several role plays for them: on the first day they should work out a fictitious marketing concept for the next home match. On the second day hold and take part in a press conference. One group plays the journalists and poses the questions, the other group answers as the football players. *How do you say...?* Sometimes the students struggle for words but they always manage to put together full sentences. Their enthusiasm for football helps them overcome their fear of making mistakes.



Some students are not only well versed in football terms, but they are also familiar with the English language itself - almost as perfect as a certain politician in Tyrol. Seeing a Fulham FC home match is the highlight. Craven Cottage, the long-standing stadium for London's *Whites*, is wonderfully situated next to a park near and the river Thames. Sitting on the wooden seats in the stands, a listed building, the students learn that at Fulham football has been played just a little longer than it has in Vienna. *Since 1879.*

**Good show:** "Take a seat, please!" Michael Cole, former BBC journalist, personal assistant to the club's owner *Mohamed al-Fayed* and today one club's directors, insists on welcoming the young guests from Austria in person. Fulham FC may arguably only be London's fourth club, but it is professionally run, especially compared with our own Austrian clubs. For example, more than 100 people work for the charity Fulham Foundation which, among other things, looks after socially disadvantaged kids.

Fulham's A-team, star-studded with top international players, not only fascinates the London crowds but also mesmerises the Viennese students. The oldest Premiership stadium in London is sold out even for the fixture against relegation-threatened Wigan Athletic. And that the match-winning goal was scored in the very last minute, it looks as if it was staged especially for the guests from Austria.

On Sunday the students get the chance to show off their newly acquired skills on the football pitch. However, at a mini-tournament at Motspur Park, Fulham's spacious training centre, they receive a footballing lesson from the inventors of the beautiful game - the English, narrowly losing 2-1!

The Austrian students' teacher, Mr. Paul Gindl, enthalls: "Here in the motherland of football we have used football as the medium, connecting with the lads, and learning a foreign language.

