

AU men's soccer team travels to England

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Several members of the Alfred University men's soccer team travelled to England, where they are in the midst of a 10-day trip. The Saxons will train in England, play against local club teams there, and take in a pair of professional matches. A contingent of 23 -- AU head coach Scott Miller, 16 members of the team, and six members of AU players Rigel Johnson's and Nick Schneider's families -- arrived in England on Monday, Aug. 3. The group is staying in London and neighboring communities throughout its 10-day stay in England. The Saxons will play four games against small club teams similar in age and talent level and will also engage in several training sessions at facilities located in and around London. Some time is being reserved for site-seeing as well. The group will also watch two professional matches: Fulham vs. Werder Bremen and Manchester United vs. Chelsea. U.S. national team star Clint Dempsey plays for Fulham and is one of the top American players. Premier League powerhouses Manchester United and Chelsea play in the Community Shield Match. "These are two of the most decorated and celebrated squads in the history of English football," AU player Cole Boje, an AU player who made the trip, said of Manchester United and Chelsea. "To have the opportunity to see one of these teams, let alone both playing each other, is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity." Members of the AU team who made the trip are: Johnson, Schneider, Boje, Tony Gai, Justin Shardlow, Frankie Mannino, Cory Hall, Matt Ricci, Neill Bower, Eric Lavelle, Aileen Bennett, James Chrabascz, Ben Olsen, Kevin Morgan and Ian Kelleher. The players paid their own way for the trip to England, the birthplace of soccer. For Boje, a junior defender from Bemus Point, NY, and the rest of the Saxons, it is a unique opportunity. "England is the football capital of the world. It was created here and is a way of life," Boje commented. "For any soccer player, there is truly nothing anyone could ask for in a trip - outside maybe attending a World Cup match - than to travel to England, play against Englishmen, see a professional game, and experience life in the nation where football always comes first. This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity." The team returns to Alfred on Aug. 12 and will begin preseason practices in preparation for its 2010 season opener, Sept. 1 at 7 p.m. at home against Hobart.