

The Gator Nation Goes Global: A Moment in Madrid

By: Grace Nelson

December 3rd, 2025

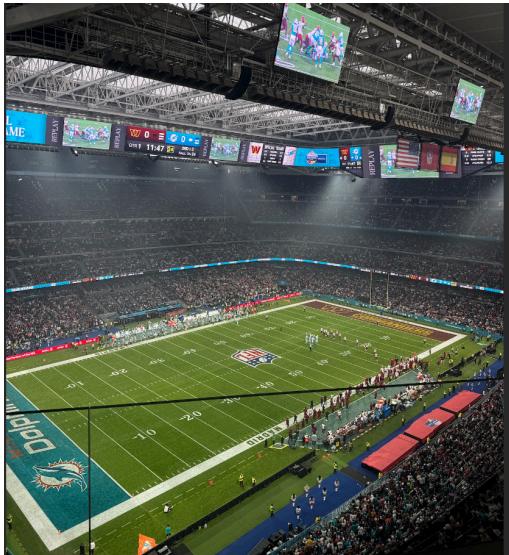
Growing up, I had zero interest in my dad's choice to play countless football games on the TV - now, it's my favorite part of the fall. I have so many core memories surrounding the Miami Heat, Florida Panthers and Miami Dolphins. Moments spent in our family living room, arenas and stadiums. All of these moments have led me to where I am today - completely enthralled by the world of sports. This is exactly what pushed me to apply to the Madrid program and I'm so glad I did.



The Preparation

I wasn't sure what to expect when I first signed up for the program but I truly learned so much before I even got on the plane. The course set us up for success as we practiced our project pitches, collaborated with one another, heard from professionals and prepared for our time in Spain. My project partner (Caroline DeLeon) and I spent the semester creating a game plan for the various videos we planned to create while we were abroad.

We planned the content we'd hoped to gather from traveling to game day and just about everything in between. While we couldn't anticipate exactly how the trip would go, we did our best to think ahead on how we wanted to capture our trip.



Conversations in Madrid

Now one thing we couldn't necessarily prepare for was how the fans would respond to the NFL but also to us gathering content.

I knew going into this trip I'd have to speak Spanish and I'll admit, I'm a little rusty after not using this skill of mine enough. Luckily, my partner and I both speak Spanish and this really immersed us into the culture and the overall fan experience.

While learning the culture and seeing how fans adapted to the NFL, we made friends along the way and had such exciting interactions. Whether it was while getting fans to participate in our content, chatting with our seatmates at the game or anything in between, I was eager to keep learning and speaking to others. Getting to practice my Spanish in this way was unlike any experience I've ever had. This trip truly broadened my view of the world and was such an exciting bonus to the already amazing trip.

Lessons Learned Across the Atlantic

While I could go on about the skills I obtained and the ways this trip will further my professional career, I'd like to highlight the friendships I was able to make with everyone on the trip. While we all were acquainted from class, this trip really connected us all. I was nervous about the trip but I immediately felt surrounded by a community that I couldn't have anticipated.

The little adventures we all had and the common goal we shared to perfect our projects is what made the trip for me. I left this trip so motivated by the individuals around me. The days we spent getting to know one another and creating our projects in Madrid reaffirmed the greatness of the University of Florida and the CJC. Going back to Gainesville, I'm looking forward to reconnecting with everyone and seeing familiar faces back on campus.



As a senior in high school, I could've never imagined that my decision to be a Florida Gator would lead me to a week in Madrid, Spain for the first ever NFL game played there. The Gator Nation is global and the people you meet who have spent their college career as a gator are nothing short of remarkable. I'll remember this trip as a week that furthered my college career and deepened my appreciation for the University of Florida. If you have the opportunity to study abroad with the CJC, don't hesitate to take it!