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Eastern Michigan University

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Real Madrid Trains at EMU on Scicluna Field

EMU Soccer gets an up-close look at how some of the world’s greatest players train

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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUagles.com) – It was a memorable day at Eastern Michigan University, July 31, as one of the most prestigious soccer programs in the world, Real Madrid, invaded Ypsilanti to train at EMU's Scicluna Field. Cristiano Ronaldo and the rest of Real Madrid practiced on Eastern's home pitch Thursday afternoon in preparation for the team's International Champions Cup match against Manchester United, set to take place on Saturday, Aug. 2, at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor.

It was a total team effort between the Spanish soccer club and the EMU Department of Athletics to host the private training session. "To have one of the most world renowned soccer clubs come to Eastern Michigan is a true honor," remarked EMU Vice President and Director of Athletics Heather Lyke. "We were really pleased with the opportunity to host them here. The recognition of our facilities, our staff and our women’s soccer student-athletes to see this type of team train here was really the opportunity of a lifetime. This is something we all will remember, especially our student-athletes."

The EMU soccer team also assisted in staffing the practice, an opportunity that the current Eagles will remember for the rest of their lives. "We were all surprised and excited," said junior goalkeeper Megan McCabe (Arlington Heights, Ill.-Prospect). "I'm from outside of Chicago, I made the trip up last night and I'm leaving tonight. It's a great opportunity for our school and our team."
"When I first read the e-mail, my reaction was I need to cancel all of my plans," remarked Megan Trapp (Plymouth, Mich.-Canton). "It seemed to me that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I've never seen an international game and to seeing these players work hard and watching their intensity, their focus, their energy is something that will motivate us after winning a Mid-American Conference Championship."

In addition to the excitement of the EMU soccer players, the coaching staff was thrilled about the opportunity as well. It was a chance for the Eagles' staff to learn from professional players and coaches as well.

"I'm speechless to be honest, seeing these guys on our pitch. For the team to be out here and see them play at this pace and their intensity, this is what soccer dreams are made of," noted EMU Head Soccer Coach Scott Hall. "Once you get past the star struck of seeing Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and all of these guys out here, you just realize that this is an amazing experience."

Coach Hall also believes that this will benefit the Eagles as the team begins to train themselves for the upcoming season. "I think this brings us together as a group," continued Hall. "With us striving to be at the top of our game and then seeing these guys (Real Madrid) come in with their professionalism and approach to the game, it really helps our team's mentality heading into the season."

As Real Madrid gears up for its big game at The Big House on Saturday, the Eagles are set to begin training for their 2014 campaign next week. The defending MAC regular season champions will kick off the season on Scicluna Field, Aug. 14, hosting the University of Detroit Mercy in an exhibition contest scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. EMU's first regular season matchup will also take place on the friendly confines of Scicluna Field as the Green and White square off against Fordham University, Aug. 22, at 4 p.m.