



Changing life stories

Dutch Diaries – chapter 9

Wednesday 19th July 2017

6 p.m. EURO 2017 Fanzone, Utrecht, Netherlands (then walking to the stadium)

We're here. In Utrecht. England v Scotland kicks off in three hours. WOO-HOOOOOOO.

Mrs Mahal and Mr Douglas took us to the Fanzone first. This **AMAZING** square in Utrecht with a skills zone and **TWO** table football tables (where Anya and I beat Mo and Danny) and cafés and music and a huge orange animal mascot that Danny and I said was a cat and Anya and Mo said was a bear. (It was **SO** a cat.)

So yes, we're friends now. Anya and me. And Danny too, I suppose.

There was one **BAD** moment, where I thought Anya had been fooling me all along and really was mean. I'd started writing my diary on the train to Utrecht. Then, when we'd been at the Fanzone for a while and it was really busy with England and Scotland fans shouting and laughing, suddenly I couldn't find it...

It had gone. **NOT** this again. As soon as I cried out, Anya was up and dashing across the Fanzone, nearly falling over the bear-cat thing. And – for half a sad second – I thought Anya had my diary and was running off with it. Then I saw her stop over by the table football, bend over and hold something up in the air.

MY DIARY!!!

I was so happy. And she was too. I think it was good that she could find my diary and help me. After, you know... I said thank you a lot of times. So we're definitely friends now. **100%**.

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After that, Mo and Anya and I walked arm in arm along the canal, past cafés and bridges to the stadium, its floodlights shining against a perfect blue sky.

8.30 p.m. *Stadion Galgenwaard, Utrecht, Netherlands*

I can't believe it!!!!!!!

I am at an England match in a major football tournament. **Me. Here. Now.**

The players have warmed up and are going off now. So, time for a quick write in the diary. We walked up to the stadium and it was really friendly. Lots of England and Scotland tops. And one Leeds United top on a boy a bit younger than me. The town is beautiful. All the buildings are old and there's a canal with little boats on and flowers. There are no cars either. It's perfect.

One weird thing. People are smoking in the stadium, near us, even though there are signs up to say you can't. The smell is horrible. But that's the only down side.

Once we were in our seats, I saw Clare Balding off the TV. The one who did those books about horses. She was doing TV interviews. Right in front of us. Bella shouted out her name and Clare Balding looked round and waved.

Anyway, the players are coming on now. We all have inflatable red hitty sticks on our seats, so now we're bashing each other with them. Mo has two and is making a terrible noise.

9.45 p.m. *Half time*

What a half! In the first minute Scotland had a shot and our keeper had to knock it over the bar for a corner. I felt nervous. But not for long.

Two goals from Jodie Taylor. Both class.



Jordan Nobbs is all over the middle of the pitch. Scotland can't handle her. She is SOOOOOO good. I was starting to feel a bit disloyal to Ellen White, who is my **top hero footballer**. Maybe I liked Jordan Nobbs even more.

And then Ellen White scored. **YAY!** I cheered too loudly and everyone looked at me. But I don't care. I can cheer if I want to.

3-0 at half time. To us.

The substitutes have been warming up at half time. Anya asked me why the England players were doing short passing drills and the Scotland players just hoofing it to each other from 30 yards away. I said I didn't know why. But it's a good point. Maybe that's why England are playing better?

10.35 p.m. Full time: England 6 Scotland 0

Can you believe it? **Six Nil!** The man on the speakers kept shouting it out each time we scored.

"ENG-LAND 4 SCOTLAND zeeeeee-ro". It was funny. You know. At the time.

The players have been clapping the fans. They're coming over to us next, I think.

It sounds like there are fireworks going off all over the stadium. But it's not. It's people stamping on the red hitty stick things. (I have no idea what to call them.) But it is really just like fireworks.

So, in the second half we... Sorry... I have to stop writing. Mrs Mahal wants us to go. She says we have to be quick.

Midnight, The Miffy Hotel, Utrecht



We're in the Miffy Hotel. SERIOUSLY, that's what it's called. The author of the Miffy books – Dick Bruna – is from Utrecht. There are Miffy pictures everywhere!!! And Miffy soap and flannels and cups and plates.

Anyway, after the game, Mrs Mahal marched us down to the pitch side just as the players were coming off the pitch. She waved to one of the coaches, a tall dark-haired woman in a blue tracksuit. The woman waved back and jogged over to...

Guess.

Go on.

Can you?

ELLEN WHITE.

Ellen White came over to us with the coach and shook each of our hands. She said thanks for supporting the Lionesses. That we helped the team with all our cheering.

I was stood on the end of the row as she was shaking our hands. She stopped when she reached me. Then she smiled. Then she said 'Thanks for coming, Lily.'

Ellen White knows my name. Just to say, there is no question who my hero is now. Just so we're clear.

Thank you very much for reading *Dutch Diaries* over these last three weeks. I hope you enjoyed it. If you would like to read more Tom Palmer, you can try the first chapters of most of his books by visiting www.tompalmer.co.uk/free-reads.

Teachers: If you would like further resources that work with sport to promote literacy, including activities that partner with the FA, please visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/football.

Have a lovely summer.

