



CATHOLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 Preliminary Examination 2026
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 2

INSERT

8881/02

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Passage 1. *Sudarshan Ramabadran writes about sports diplomacy and its influence on international relations.*

- 1 Saudi Arabia's state-run oil and gas conglomerate, Aramco, became FIFA's major worldwide partner under a deal until 2027. This will include sponsorship rights for the prestigious upcoming FIFA events, including the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup. Besides, Saudi also owns the English Premier League Club New Castle United and is in pole position to host FIFA World Cups in 2034 and 2035. They invested billions of dollars across a wide range of sports, including tennis, boxing, Formula 1, golf, and horse racing. This reflects the growing significance of sports diplomacy in the contemporary world while acknowledging its historical roots. Sports diplomacy has emerged as one of the subsets of cultural diplomacy that has undoubtedly blurred borders, contributing to countries coming together. 5
- 2 Can sports diplomacy entail concrete policy gains? After the Chinese Cultural Revolution, in 1971, China invited table tennis players from the US, famously called the 'ping pong diplomacy' that paved the way for the visit of then US President Richard Nixon. The ensuing trip was a spectacle of benign curiosity. There were handshakes, friendly matches, and tours of the Great Wall, all under the watchful gaze of Zhou Enlai. The entire affair possessed an almost amateurish charm, a diplomatic icebreaker accomplished not with the thunder of treaties but with the gentle, hollow pop of a celluloid ball. It was a time when the trivial act of playing a game together was seen as a profound political statement, a simple bridge across a vast ideological chasm. 15
- 3 The logic of early sports diplomacy was rooted in the ideal of cultural exchange and understanding. The athlete was an unwitting ambassador, the sporting arena a neutral space where common humanity could, for a fleeting ninety minutes or a few frantic sets, transcend political enmity. It was not a transactional deal; the Americans were not paid, and the Chinese were not seeking a specific concession. The goal was to thaw a relationship that had been frozen for two decades. It worked because, on the surface, the stakes were so low. Sport was the informal handshake that preceded the formal meeting, a gesture that cost little but signalled much. This was the model that persisted for years: a cricket match between India and Pakistan, a rugby tour of apartheid-era South Africa (albeit a deeply controversial one), and the Olympics as an ostensible festival of global unity. The power lay in the symbolism of participation itself. 20
- 4 The idea of boycotting or banning countries from international sport is not new, of course; the exclusion of South Africa during apartheid is the landmark case. But the practice has become a central and highly contested tool of modern statecraft. In the wake of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russian and Belarusian teams and athletes were barred from a wide range of competitions. Today, a similar and ferocious debate surrounds Israel. Citing the conflict in Gaza, a coalition of governments, activist groups, and sporting federations is demanding the exclusion of Israeli athletes and teams from global competitions, including the upcoming Olympics and FIFA-sanctioned events. The argument posits that participation in the international sporting community is not an inalienable right but a privilege contingent upon adherence to international norms. 30
- 5 Sports diplomacy has been a significant tool in international relations throughout history, enabling countries to showcase national prowess, enable policy gains, and foster collaboration among nations. Sport's ability to convene and unite people across borders makes it a powerful enabler for diplomatic functions. 35 40

Passage 2. *The author argues that sports diplomacy has lost its innocence.*

- 1 The modern iteration of sports diplomacy is less about cultural exchange and more about strategic investment, a field now dominated by the term ‘sportswashing’. Countries now view hosting mega-events like the FIFA World Cup or the Olympic Games not as a charming invitation to the world but as a multi-billion-pound exercise in nation-branding and the projection of soft power. The Qatar World Cup in 2022 and Saudi Arabia’s audacious investments in everything from its domestic football league to international golf are prime exhibits. The objective is no longer merely to build relations but to purchase a global reputation, to use the universal, apolitical appeal of sport to apply a glossy veneer over domestic political realities and human rights records. The athletic contest is a high-value asset in building the state’s public image, and its currency is influence. 5

- 2 This influx of state capital into sport has produced an inevitable and powerful counterreaction. When a country spends lavishly to place itself at the centre of the world’s attention, it cannot control the direction of the gaze. The very act of hosting invites scrutiny. Consequently, the discourse surrounding major sporting events has become a de facto audit of the host nation’s values. We saw it with the protests over China’s human rights record ahead of the 2008 and 2022 Olympics, and it reached a fever pitch with the relentless focus on the rights of migrant workers in Qatar. The sports stadium is no longer just a venue for physical prowess; it is a courtroom for the court of public opinion. Journalists, activists, and fans now arrive not only with team colours but with a checklist of concerns, turning every press conference into a potential grilling on geopolitics. The sporting world, having accepted the state’s money, finds it can no longer credibly claim to be above the state’s politics. 10 15 20

- 3 Perhaps the most intense shift has occurred not in the state ministries or corporate boardrooms, but on the pitch itself. The modern athlete is a global brand, a media entity with a direct line to millions of followers, and a progressively potent political actor. From Colin Kaepernick kneeling to protest racial injustice in the United States to Marcus Rashford’s campaign against child food poverty in the UK, athletes are leveraging their platforms to force social and political conversations. They are no longer just pawns in a diplomatic game orchestrated by others; they are players in their own right. This individual activism complicates the state-led narrative, creating an unpredictable force of influence. A government might wish for its national team to project an image of serene strength, only for its star player to tweet a message of dissent that reverberates across the globe. 25 30

- 4 Sport is no longer a gentle introduction to diplomacy; it is a chaotic, high-stakes, and deeply politicised arena where the contest for influence is as fierce as any match. We may have lost the charming simplicity of the old game, but we have, perhaps, gained a more honest reflection of the world in which it is now played.

[Turn over

Passage 3. *The journalist writes about e-sports diplomacy.*

- 1 South Korea has played host to massive events like League of Legends World Champions, World Cyber Games, and the KeSPA Cup. Such popular international e-sports competitions augment a nation's ambition to be a premier e-sports destination in the region.
- 2 South Korea has rapidly elevated its international standing by positioning itself as a premier global hub for e-sports, bringing significant prestige to the nation through high-profile event hosting and increasing professional recognition. These events brought in hundreds of millions in potential viewership and solidified South Korea's reputation as a key player in the industry. Collaborating with international federations and tech companies has boosted the development of the local and regional virtual sports scene. 5
- 3 By hosting major, high-stake tournaments, South Korea has solidified its image as a modern, tech-savvy, and youthful destination. Hosting e-sports events catalyse the development of sport technology and innovation in virtual sports and showcase new avenues for people to lead an active lifestyle. Like traditional sport, e-sports communities transcend traditional national borders, welcoming everyone to interactive spaces for engagement. This creates common ground by bringing together different communities, especially sport and e-sports enthusiasts and the youths. It can also reinforce affinity for South Korea as a travel destination among younger audiences and potentially drive repeat visitorship in the long term. 10 15



CATHOLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 Preliminary Examination 2026
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

CANDIDATE
NAME

CLASS

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 2

8881/02

1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.

Additional Materials: Insert

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your name and class on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black.

Do not use paper clips, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.

The Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Note that up to **15** marks out of **50** will be awarded for your use of language.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

For Examiner's Use		
Content	Short-Answer Questions	/11
	Summary	/8
	New Item Type Question	/4
	Application Question	/12
Language		/15
Total		/50

Answer **all** questionsFor Examiner's
Use

Your answers should be:

- written **in your own words as far as possible**. Where you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it.
- written in **continuous prose**.

From Passage 1

1 In paragraph 1, what is the purpose of the author's opening statement?

.....

.....

.....

.....[2]

2 In paragraph 2, why does the author use the example of "the 'ping pong diplomacy' that paved the way for the visit of then US President Richard Nixon" (lines 11-12)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....[3]

3 In paragraph 2, explain what the term 'diplomatic icebreaker' (line 15) implies about the relationship between the nations prior to their meeting.

.....

.....[1]

[Turn over

- 4 In paragraph 3, what is the author suggesting by using the words 'on the surface' (line 23)?

.....

.....

.....

.....[2]

- 5 Using paragraph 3, explain **one** way in which the author uses language to describe the role of sports diplomacy. **Use your own words as far as possible.**

.....

.....

.....

.....[2]

- 6 In paragraph 5, why is sports a 'powerful enabler' (line 40-41)?

.....

.....[1]

For Examiner's
Use

7 Summarise the problems with sports diplomacy.

[8]

[8]

[Turn over

From both passages*For Examiner's Use*

- 8** Passage 1 states that 'The idea of boycotting or banning countries from international sport is not new' (line 28).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....[2]

- 9** Passage 2 states that Sports is 'a high-value asset in building the state's public image' (line 9).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....[2]

How far do you agree that sports diplomacy offers more benefits than harm?

- the ideas and opinions from **at least one** of the reading passages
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

[illegible]

BLANK PAGE

2026 JC2 GP Preliminary Examination
Suggested Answer Scheme

From Passage 1

1. In paragraph 1, what is the purpose of the author's **opening** statement? [2]

From the passage	Suggested paraphrase
Saudi Arabia's state-run oil and gas conglomerate, Aramco, became FIFA's major worldwide partner under a deal until 2027.	a. [Function] The author is using a specific example to • contextualise • illustrates the topic • makes the topic relatable to readers • catch the attention/ engage/ interest of the readers • introduce the topic
	b. [Context] • the importance/ value of sports diplomacy. • to consider what sports diplomacy may be about.

2. In paragraph 2, why does the author use the example of "the 'ping pong diplomacy' that paved the way for the visit of then US President Richard Nixon" (lines 11-12)? [3]

From the passage	Suggested paraphrase
	a. The author refers to the example to validate/ prove/ illustrate/ substantiate that [1] <i>Note: Point a must be attempted before we will award points b, c</i>
It was a time when the trivial act of playing a game together was seen as a profound political statement, a simple bridge across a vast ideological chasm. (lines 16-17)	b. though sport may seem minor/ insignificant , [1] OR, <i>inferred</i> though sport may seem friendly/ casual (rather than formal)
It was a time when the trivial act of playing a game together was seen as a profound political statement, a simple bridge across a vast ideological chasm .	c. it serves the purpose of overcoming wide gaps/ clashes/ irreconcilable differences in political beliefs . [1]

3. In paragraph 2, explain what the term 'diplomatic icebreaker' (line 15) implies about the relationship between the nations prior to their meeting. [1]

From the passage	Suggested paraphrase
	The relationship was frosty/ tense/ strained . OR, hardly any diplomatic relations. [1]

4. In paragraph 3, what is the author suggesting by using the words 'on the surface' (line 23)? [2]

From the passage	Suggested paraphrase
The goal was to thaw a relationship that had been frozen for two decades. It worked because, on the surface , the stakes were so low . (lines 22-23)	a. The author is suggesting that it may appear to be/ seem • unimportant/ casual/ light-hearted • OR, there is nothing to lose, Accepted: trivial, small DNA: dangerous
	b. when there is a deeper/ more meaningful purpose to sports diplomacy [1] OR, when they look closer, there is actually much to lose.

5. Using paragraph 3, explain one way in which the author uses language to describe the role of sports diplomacy. Use your own words as far as possible. [2]

From the passage	Suggested paraphrase
The goal was to thaw a relationship that had been frozen for two decades. (lines 22-23)	[a1] The author uses the phrase 'thaw a relationship' / uses the word 'frozen' [a2] to illustrate how sport diplomacy is used to rekindle/ restore/ improving/ rebuild good relationships between nations.
Sport was the informal handshake that preceded the formal meeting, (line 24)	[b1] The author uses the phrase 'informal handshake' [b2] to suggest that sports diplomacy is casual/ light-hearted/ stress-free interaction between nations. OR, ...allowed countries to be comfortable with each other...
Sport was the informal handshake that preceded the formal meeting, (line 24)	[b3] The author uses the word 'handshake' [b4] to suggest that sports diplomacy is an agreement between nations to foster closer relations.
a gesture that cost little but signalled much . (lines 24-25)	[c1] The author used the phrase 'cost little but signalled much' [c2] to highlight that sports diplomacy involves low risk/ effort/ sacrifice but carried great significance (despite being inexpensive).
This was the model that persisted for years: a cricket match between India and Pakistan, a rugby tour of apartheid-era South Africa (albeit a	[d1] The author uses the word 'ostensible'

deeply controversial one), and the Olympics as an ostensible festival of global unity. (lines 27)	[d2] to emphasise that sports diplomacy presents what appears to be/ on the surface a celebration of nations coming together.
The athlete was an unwitting ambassador, the sporting arena a neutral space where common humanity could, for a fleeting ninety minutes or a few frantic sets, transcend political enmity . (line 21)	[e1] The author uses the word ' transcend political enmity ' [e2] to underscore that sports diplomacy goes beyond hostility between nations .

DNA: use examples, comparison, listing

Commented [YCYL(1)]: Can add 'appears to be / is on the surface' - according to dictionary definition?

6. In paragraph 5, why is sports a 'powerful enabler' (line 40-41)? [1]

From the passage	Suggested paraphrase
Sport's ability to convene and unite people across borders makes it a powerful enabler for diplomatic functions . (lines 40-41)	Sport can connect/ bring people from different nations together . OR, Sport fosters solidarity globally/ across nations . OR, Sport improves international relations .

From Passage 2

*Please **count the total number of words** for the Summary.

7. Summarise the problems with sports diplomacy. Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**. [8]

	From the passage	Suggested paraphrase
1.	The modern iteration of sports diplomacy is less about cultural exchange ...(Line 1)	Sports diplomacy is not so much about learning another country's heritage/ tradition .
2.	and more about strategic investment , a field now dominated by the term 'sportswashing' . (line 1-2)	Sport diplomacy has a private agenda // seeks to gain a competitive advantage .
3.	The objective is no longer merely to build relations (line 6)	Sports diplomacy is losing its purpose in facilitating dialogue between countries OR, Sport diplomacy's main objective is not just / solely focused on / attention has been diverted from developing bonds / close connections
4.	a multi-billion-pound exercise in nation-branding and the projection of soft power . (line 4) OR, but to purchase a global reputation , (line 7) OR a high-value asset in a state's public relations portfolio (line 8)	but to extend/ promote a country's influence over other nations OR, but to buy a nation's international influence/ image

Commented [TWLS(2)]: Is it a problem because it's so expensive?

Commented [YCYL(3R2)]: I think the key point is about the shift from the traditional mode of growing one's influence to utilising huge sums of money/ massive capital deployment to buy status/standing

		OR, but to improve the nation's image/ manage/ shape how the country is perceived by others
5.	to use the universal, apolitical appeal of sport to apply a glossy veneer over domestic political realities and human rights records. (lines 7-8)	Sports diplomacy serves as (an attractive) façade / (an appealing) distraction, obscuring / diverting attention from local problems and violations / infringement of fundamental / basic freedom / liberties OR, Sports diplomacy serves as (an attractive) distraction, diverting attention from more serious issues / controversies faced by the country
6.	When a country spends lavishly to place itself at the centre of the world's attention, it cannot control the direction of the gaze. (lines 11-12)	Sports diplomacy cannot shape / frame / steer public perception / perspective / ways of seeing
7.	The very act of hosting invites scrutiny. (line 12)	as it draws / provokes close inspection / investigation / examination // coming under the spotlight
8.	Consequently, the discourse surrounding major sporting events has become a de facto audit of the host nation's values. (line 13)	People will assess the host nation's morals/ ethics/ principles.
9.	We saw it with the protests over China's human rights record ahead of the 2008 and 2022 Olympics, and it reached a fever pitch with the relentless focus on the rights of migrant workers in Qatar. (lines 14-16)	that may reach peak / extreme / maximum intensity / tensions.
10.	The sports stadium is no longer just a venue for physical prowess; it is a courtroom for the court of public opinion. (lines 16-17)	Society uses sports as a means/ platform to judge society/ debate societal issues,
11.	Journalists, activists, and fans now arrive not only with team colours but with a checklist of concerns, turning every press conference into a potential grilling on geopolitics. (lines 17-18)	where interviews may become platforms / spaces to rigorously / intensely discuss / debate international relations / power relations / strategic relations between countries. Accepted lift: geopolitics
12.	The sporting world, having accepted the state's money, finds it can no longer credibly claim to be above the state's politics. (lines 19-20)	Funded by the nation, sports must now serve its interests. OR, Athletes cannot continue to pretend to be / cannot continue to (genuinely) say that they are uninvolved / divorced from national / government political agendas.
13.	This individual activism complicates the state-led narrative, (lines 27)	Personal involvement of athletes may confuse/ contradict the nation's framing/ version of the issue,
14.	creating an unpredictable force of influence. (lines 28)	such that the driver/ trigger/ cause of change is uncertain/ unforeseeable.

Commented [YCYL(4): I think this is an attempt by the writer to define sportswashing
So can we accept a broader interpretation i.e. diverting attention away from the 'more serious issues/controversies faced by the country' ?

Commented [YCYL(5): Context: allow lift of hosting sporting events?

Commented [YCYL(6): Accepted lift geopolitical issues?
This is difficult to rephrase

Commented [YCYL(7): Allow lift of politics

15.	Sport is no longer a gentle introduction to diplomacy; it is a chaotic , (line 31)	Sport diplomacy is disorderly/ turbulent/ volatile/ unstable ,
16.	high-stakes , (line 31)	risky/ significant / consequential ,
17.	and deeply politicised arena where the contest for influence is as fierce as any match. (line 31-32)	and highly divisive . Accepted: politicise OR, the competition for power is very intense .
18.	We may have lost the charming simplicity of the old game (line 33-34)	Sports is no longer endearing/ likeable / delightful because it is not straightforward / uncomplicated

Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Points	1-2	3-4	5	6	7	8	9	10+

From both passages

8. Passage 1 states that 'The idea of boycotting or banning countries from international sport is not new' (line 28).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer.

Selected idea from Passage 3	Suggested paraphrase of Passage 3 [a]	Suggested Justification [b]
Like traditional sport, e-sports communities transcend traditional national borders, welcoming everyone to interactive spaces for engagement. (lines 13-14)	Like traditional sport, e-sports communities go beyond geographical boundaries, bringing all people/ everybody together on platforms which allow for participation and connection.	Passage 3 shows that sports do not exclude nations (but instead promotes cross-border connection and collectible engagement).
This creates common ground by bringing together different communities . (lines 14-15)	E-sports communities foster shared understanding by connecting diverse groups of people .	

9. Passage 2 states that Sports is 'a high-value asset in building the state's public image' (line 9).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer.

Selected idea from Passage 3	Suggested paraphrase of Passage 3 [a]	Suggested Justification [b]
South Korea has rapidly elevated its international standing by positioning itself as a premier global hub for e-sports , (lines 4-5)	South Korea's global reputation has skyrocketed / drastically improved / risen swiftly .	Thus, passage 3 illustrates how sports can play an important/ significant role in shaping how a country is perceived by others . BOD: (soft power) popularity
South Korea has rapidly elevated its international	South Korea's global reputation improved/ risen as	

standing by positioning itself as a premier global hub for e-sports , (lines 4-5)	it establishes itself as the leading/ prestigious place for e-sports.	Lifted: value, valuable
These events brought in hundreds of millions in potential viewership and solidified South Korea's reputation as a key player in the industry. (line 7)	Through esports, South Korea has established/ proven itself as an important member/ cornerstone of/ a major player in the esports industry.	
bringing significant prestige to the nation through high-profile event hosting and increasing professional recognition . (lines 5-6) By hosting major, high-stake tournaments, South Korea has solidified its image as a modern, tech-savvy, and youthful destination. (lines 10-11)	South Korea has strengthened its reputation through by organising games that are elite/ top tier/ of high visibility/ critically acclaimed .	