



RAMADAN & FOOTBALL FACTSHEET



Every year millions of Muslims around the world fast during the holy month of Ramadan. This factsheet will help explain what this means and its impact on football

During Ramadan Muslims will wake before dawn for a meal called 'Suhur'. When daylight is over, most Muslims will traditionally break the fast with dates or water, followed by a meal, this is called 'Iftar', which means 'the breaking of the fast' and is traditionally an occasion family and friends to get together.

Dr Zafar Iqbal, Head of Sports Medicine, Liverpool FC **"I work with several Muslim players and during Ramadan the coaching, medical and sports science staff try and help them by optimising their diet and customising their training. Fasting is difficult and playing elite football at the same time is a big challenge, that's why these decisions are always down to the individual"**



What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is a month in the Islamic calendar when adult Muslims are required to fast. It is known as one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Ramadan lasts one lunar month, around 29 or 30 days, which means it comes around 11 days earlier each year and so starts on a different date each year.

What football rules apply to Ramadan?

The FA rules make it clear that all faiths are observed and respected:

FA RULE B5 Football & Religious Observance

(a) A Participant cannot be compelled to play football on bona fide occasions where religious observance precludes such activity, save where the Participant: (i) has consented to do so on such occasions; or (ii) is registered as a player under written contract, which shall be taken as consent to play on such occasions unless otherwise provided for in the contract.

(b) Annually, when planning programmes, Competitions shall define and notify agreed dates of such occasions.

This year

Ramadan is predicted to start on 28 June and conclude on 27 July 2014 (depending on the sighting of the moon). Adult Muslims give up food and drink during daylight hours. Those who are sick, physically unable, travelling, pregnant or very young are excused.

Ramadan and youth football

There is no set age when Muslims start fasting, it is generally post-puberty but can vary from between 8 and 16 years old. This will effect Muslim participation in youth football during Ramadan, especially in the older age groups. As this is the case best practice for leagues would be to ask any predominantly Muslim teams about their plans to fast and play.

Fasting

Fasting combined with extra prayers and a lack of sleep can leave people feeling a little more tired and dehydrated than normal. Many Muslims will find it harder to play football and may not want to take part.

Muslims who are fasting do not expect you to stop eating or drinking, although it would be polite not to eat, drink or smoke in front of them. They may also enjoy sitting together and sharing food when they break their fast (Iftar) and will welcome non-Muslims to join in. To fast with Muslim friends, even for part of the day, is a good way of enhancing your understanding.



Praying

Muslims may practice their faith more during Ramadan and may wish to offer prayers during the day. This will normally be two to three times a day for a few minutes a time for which they will require a small private area. Muslims may also attend extra prayers, known as 'Tarawih', during the night.

Acknowledging those observing Ramadan

As with any religion, showing your Muslim friends that you know it is Ramadan is likely to be appreciated. Posting an acknowledgement on your website or twitter or simply a notice in your clubhouse is a good idea.

What happens when Ramadan ends?

The end of Ramadan is marked by the festival of **Eid** for which Muslims may take time off. The day Eid falls on will depend on the sighting of the moon therefore flexibility is necessary. The appropriate way to express best wishes to a Muslim at Eid is to say **"Eid Mubarak"**.

Guidance around fixtures

It is always important to take note of any religious dates when planning fixtures. Ideally, if a team has a significant number of Muslim players it is best practice to try and avoid arranging fixtures during Ramadan.

Annually The FA produces a calendar of religious dates in order to support the game, this guidance has been written to provide you with the most significant dates for religious observance together with some information on them.

Click here to see the current calendar.

"Ramadan Mubarak to all our Muslim friends. Best wishes to you for this the holy month of Ramadan. "

Adil Nabi, West Bromwich Albion and England U21 ***"Ramadan and Eid are recognised by my club but as a professional I have a responsibility too, this year Ramadan fell during pre-season, a crucial part of the season so I never asked for time off. The club was very much aware though and put a training plan together to make it easier for me"***



Rimla Akhtar, FA Council Member and Chair of the Muslim Women's Sports Foundation ***"Faith and football are two essential parts of who I am. The flexibility that I've been shown in this regard has been vital in my journey in football. Taking note of Ramadan and all other faith events will help make football a game for everyone"***