

Faith and Football: Ramadan 2023

GUIDANCE NOTES

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Ramadan 2023

The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, and as a result, the Holy month of Ramadan starts earlier by approximately 10 days every year.

This year's Ramadan start date is expected to be **Wednesday 22 March**, subject to the sighting of the moon, and the expected end date is **Friday 21 April**.

Please note that there are also cultural differences in the start and end dates.

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Cover Picture:
Ramadan Open Iftar 2022 at Wembley Stadium



WATFORD FOOTBALL CLUB



Assalamu Alaikum
Peace and blessing be upon you

A message from Nujum Sports on the holy month of Ramadan

It is with the spirit of equality, tolerance, and learning that we established Nujum Sports almost 3 years ago. Since then, it has been pioneering work within the sporting world by working with governing bodies, professional clubs, and our ambassadors with a primary mission of 'Enabling Muslim Athletes to flourish and fulfil their potential'.

Our core principles have driven us towards building a world where we have better understanding, learning, and tolerance of the Islamic faith. We share and contribute positive voices from professional players and who want to express their Islamic values of fairness, collaboration, and a celebration to elevate the 'beautiful game' further.

This collaborative and ground-breaking work is primarily done through the signing of the Muslim Athlete Charter which is series of pledges which helps clubs and governing bodies adopt a framework for serving and supporting their professional players.

The Charter then allows us to build extra layers of support in the form of mental health provisions, access to Imams through our chaplaincy, and a network of Muslim sporting professionals. We then build a bespoke and tailored approach for each club and institutions.

Our work has taken us across the country and we have have worked with 70+ clubs including Manchester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, and Watford FC helping them navigate issues such as halal food, establishing prayer spaces, organising community engagement events, training and development, and onboarding new Muslim athletes.

IMPACT

Our work throughout the year expresses itself within the holy month of Ramadan where we help clubs map out and design interventions to get the best possible performance and meaningful support.

Key Considerations during Ramadan

Prayer Times

- Muslims pray 5 times a day
- Fajr – Early Morning prayer
- Dohr – Mid afternoon prayer
- Asr – Late afternoon prayer
- Margrib – Sunset prayer
- Isha – Late evening prayer

These times change during the year according to the length of the day. Talk to your players and better understand how you can support them in performing the prayers which in most cases will be no more than 10-12 mins.

Tarawih Prayers & Night Prayers

Tarawih are prayers done in congregation in the mosque and attached to the late eve prayer. These are longer in nature and can take 1.5 hours in total.

Muslims during the month of Ramadan also perform other prayers during the night called Thajjud which is performed at the very latter part of the night.

Understanding that some Muslim players will attend late evening prayers and attend or perform early morning prayers will result in fatigue and a change of their usual patterns. Where possible clubs can change training times to give that person some extra time for rest especially in the mornings.

Nutrition

The intake of food will fundamentally change during Ramadan. There are two main meal intakes.

Sahoor – Early morning meal before sunrise

Iftar – Sunset and the breaking of the fast

Working with the team to develop a nutritional plan during the month of Ramadan factoring in Iftar time (Breaking fast time) and Sahoor (Meal before fasting) is crucial in developing a healthy balance and maximum performance from players.

- **EID day and celebrations:** Eid is at the end of Ramadan and spent with family and friends. Clubs can work with their players to make sure adequate provisions can be made.
- **Reflection:** Offering time and support to players who wish to spend time alone to reflect and pray.
- **Travelling:** If players are travelling outside their cities they are given special dispensation where they can skip a fast and make up after Ramadan (conditions apply).

These are some of the key considerations clubs can make when talking to their Muslim players.

Nujum has always been inspired and motivated by our principles of equality and humanity which are sourced and channelled from our faith. With that spirit and determination, we promise to continue listening, learning and evolving to make sure we can amplify your voices, create pathways and opportunities, and make your professional sporting life one that is driven by equality, opportunity, and wellbeing.

Finally, Nujum Sports together with The FA wish and pray that during the holy month of Ramadan, we can come together as a global community unified in reflection, celebration, and spirituality and with these universal objectives we can heal our hearts, build bridges of friendship and understanding, and create opportunities to exchange ideas, fast in solidarity, and break bread with our neighbours, colleagues, and the less fortunate.



Harun Rashid, Director of EDI & Community

Nujum Sports

For more information

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The Month of Mercy: An Imam's Perspective

Ramadan is a month of mercy, compassion and blessings for the believer. It is a season of worship and submitting and recognising their need for Allah. It is an opportunity to become closer to Allah and reinforce the connection with him. There are numerous opportunities to please Allah, through prayer and charity.

The verses from the Qur'an Allah in which Allah swt tells us about the importance of the month of Ramadan are from the greatest blessings he has given us, it is news of glad tidings for those who are successful and obey Allah.

Ramadan is the month to revitalize and strengthen our faith. The sign of strong faith is linked the amount of worship one does, along with the sincerity we have. The doors of mercy are wide open, and the doors of Allah's punishment are closed. The forces of evil and devils are chained up, nothing stands between us and success except the following of desires.

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger pbuh said, "When Ramadan comes the doors of paradise are opened and the doors of the fire are closed, and the devils are chained." (al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The month is a time for strength and to exert one's effort in worship, remember two of the greatest victories for Muslims took place in Ramadan, the victory at Badr and the conquest of Makkah.

The real aim and purpose of Ramadan is to become a better Muslim, having acquired more Taqwa: Consciousness of Allah through fasting, having overcome your desires and showing yourself what you can achieve.

Allah swt wipes away the sins of those who repent and worship him, those sins that we accumulated over the year, Allah is then most merciful. At the end of the month a Muslim has hope that they forgiven and saved, through fasting, praying at night, reading the Qur'an, feeding the poor, and submitting themselves to their Lord.

The Prophet pbuh said, "Whoever fasts in Ramadan with Eemaan and seeking reward (from Allah) his past sins will be forgiven." (al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The famous scholar Ibn Al-Qayim said: fasting is an abandonment of those things that the soul loves and desires, preferring instead Allah's love and contentment. And it is a secret kept between the servant and his Lord - no one else is aware of it. Fasting has an amazing effect in preserving one's outer limbs and inner capacities as well as protecting the soul from being overtaken by destructive components, which can ruin and destroy it. And it has a remarkable effect in causing all the harmful things that prevent the soul from being healthy to be emptied out. So fasting guards and protects the health of the person's heart and bodily limbs. And it returns the soul all that the hands of the desires has taken from it. So, it is from the greatest ways of improving one's Taqwa, as Allah says: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you in order that you attain Taqwa." [Surah a-Baqarah, Ayah 183].

May Allah make us from those who are accepted and grant us success in both worlds.

Ameen



Imam Wasim Kempson
Nujum Sports



Football and Ramadan

The main questions answered

Q: WHAT IS RAMADAN AND WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

A: Ramadan is the holiest month in the Muslim calendar. It is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting to commemorate the first revelation of the Quran¹ to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) according to Islamic belief.

Fasting during this holy month is one of the five pillars of Islam, which also include prayer, charity, profession of faith & pilgrimage. Ramadan lasts for one lunar month which is a maximum of 30 days and its start and ending dates are determined by the sighting of the moon. Practically this means it occurs around 10 days earlier each year.

Ramadan is the most important and spiritual time of year for many Muslims and people may well change their routine, activities and life/work balance for this period. Fasting is the focus of the month, but people's mindsets and the way they interact with others may also vary due to their focus on faith at this time.

During daylight hours adult Muslims and those who have reached puberty are required to abstain from eating, drinking (including water) and smoking. The obligation of fasting does not apply to those who are physically or mentally unwell, travelling or pregnant. If any individual has not been able to observe a specific day's fast, they may need to make up for this later on by either fasting for a day after Ramadan or giving a meal to someone more in need or donating the value of that meal to charity.

Islam is not the only religion which prescribes fasting as an act of worship. Almost all major religions have periods of fasting within the practice of their faith.

¹ Organised in 114 chapters, the Quran is the central religious text of Islam. It is believed by Muslims to be a revelation from God and is widely regarded as the finest work in classical Arabic literature.

Q: WHAT FOOTBALL RULES COVER RAMADAN?

A: FA Rules make it clear that all faiths can be observed and will be respected within football. This is covered in FA Rule B5: Football & Religious Observance, which can be found in the [FA Handbook](#).

In practice, it means no-one can be compelled to play on a religious holiday unless they've consented, or are a professional player under contract.

As far as **grassroots football** is concerned, the rule means that any fixtures that fall within Ramadan can be played either after sunset or delayed until after Eid ul-Fitr (the celebration at the end of Ramadan).

Different Muslims will have different interpretations and observance of Islam and therefore it is always advisable to consult in advance with anyone affected.

Q: CAN FIXTURES BE POSTPONED BECAUSE OF RAMADAN?

A: Yes, but this should be avoided by leagues compiling Ramadan-sensitive fixture lists. If it is known that a team has a significant number of Muslim players, it is best practice to ask any predominantly Muslim clubs/teams about their plans to fast and play and then plan fixtures accordingly.

It is always important to take note of any important religious dates when planning fixtures. To help this, The FA produces a calendar of religious dates. The 2022-23 editions of our equality, diversity and inclusion calendar for grassroots football and our 'Faith and Football' educational document can be found [here](#). Both are designed to help participants make the game more inclusive and truly welcoming for their local communities

||| *We are dedicated to supporting people of all faiths. Ramadan is an important time in the Islamic calendar and this document will help and support those in football to understand the significance and practices of the holy month of Ramadan* |||

Anwar Uddin, MBE
EDI Grassroots Manager, The FA

Q: CAN REFEREES DECLINE TO OFFICIATE DURING RAMADAN?

A: Yes, but again this should be avoided by leagues knowing which referees are Muslim and their plans to fast and pray during Ramadan.

Q: HOW DOES RAMADAN AFFECT YOUTH FOOTBALL?

A: There is no set age when Muslims start fasting, but it is generally post-puberty which can vary from between eight and 16 years old. This will usually affect Muslim participation in youth football during Ramadan, especially in the older age groups.

As above, it is best practice for leagues to ask Muslim clubs/teams in advance about their plans to fast and play youth matches during Ramadan.

To read The FA's latest guidance for grassroots football, [click here](#).



Tips for Muslim colleagues and participants in football

With this in mind and if you are a Muslim member of staff, player, coach, referee or other football participant, Ramadan may have an effect on you, particularly physically.

This is mainly due to the fasting required, so maintaining good physical health requires additional thought and preparation. Fasting is difficult because the body has to adapt to not receiving food and fluids throughout the day.

Not having regular quick energy provided by frequent meals during the day means the body has to rely on what it can store and then change the way it works. Dehydration is the biggest issue. It causes fatigue which slows down many of our bodily organ functions.

Here are tips we hope you'll find useful and at the foot of this page are some links to more detailed information.

EXERCISE TIMES

The best times to exercise are in periods that limit losses in fitness or strength. With daylight fasting in mind, the ideal exercise time is therefore around midnight. That's because it's a few hours after you have broken your fast in the evening meal (iftar) and allows enough time thereafter for your body to digest any food, clear the stomach and direct blood to the exercising muscles.

In addition, after you've exercised around midnight and before you go to bed, you also have time to consume sufficient fluid and glucose to enable you to replenish muscle glycogen¹ stores after exercise.

¹ Glycogen is an energy-giver made from glucose in the food you eat. It is mainly stored in your liver and muscles. From these storage sites, your muscles can quickly mobilise stored glycogen as fuel.

SUGGESTED RAMADAN DIET

The dietary suggestions below are aimed at active football participants. If you have, or are likely to have, any health issues during fasting, you should seek appropriate medical advice before starting any major dietary changes.

After sunset meal (iftar):

DO:

- Eat a small amount of quick-release carbohydrates (e.g. dates, fruit, smoothies and pasta);
- Drink a whey protein shake to help with muscle regeneration and recovery.

DON'T:

- Eat big meals at this time, or the body goes into 'storage mode' and will make you feel lethargic and not want to exercise later.

Before dawn meal (suhoor):

DO:

- Focus on carbohydrates that release energy slowly (e.g. non-starchy vegetables like spinach and kale; sweet potato, pasta, nuts, fruit, oats and porridge) combined with foods that will release energy in the short/medium-term (e.g. bananas, eggs and apples);

- Drink plenty of isotonic fluids as opposed to water – ideally between two and four litres;
- Gain extra electrolytes from a soluble tablet to help with the water absorption.

DON'T:

- Skip suhoor. Getting more sleep might sound appealing, but breakfast really is the most important meal of the day and is even more important during Ramadan to get you through the fasting period;
- Eat rich, greasy, fried and sugary dishes. Aside from the unhealthy weight gain, consuming fatty and sugary foods also cause sluggishness and fatigue;
- Add too much salt, as it will increase your thirst during the day.

THE PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF FASTING

Fasting poses a challenge to your body, but it can have the following benefits:

- Weight loss;
- Improved blood sugar control;
- Improved cholesterol levels;
- Reduced inflammation within the body, leading to reduced risk factors for diabetes and cardiovascular disease;
- On a personal level, it teaches you control and self-restraint.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND READING:

- Strategies for maintaining fitness and performance during Ramadan, [Journal of Sports Sciences](#)
- Ramadan fasting and the goals of sports nutrition around exercise, [Journal of Sports Sciences](#)
- [A healthy Ramadan](#), the British Nutrition Foundation.

Tips for non-Muslim colleagues and participants in football

If you're a non-Muslim club official, member of staff, manager or coach, who either has peers, colleagues or players who are Muslim, it's good to acquaint yourself with what Ramadan involves. That way you can ensure your club or team is inclusive and welcoming, which also supports The FA's For All ethos.

It is important to note that Ramadan is the holiest month of the Muslim calendar, and it is a month where many Muslims will be immersing themselves in extra worship and a deep reflective period of introspection and mindfulness. The holy month of Ramadan is not only fasting from all foods and drinks, but also fasting from desires, foul language, bad behaviour and distractions.

Here are some tips:

WHO'S WHO

Ensure you know which of your colleagues or players are Muslims and the degree to which they will observe Ramadan.

Without invading anyone's privacy, it's good to find this out. Then you're in a good position to inform your colleagues, other team members, leagues and organisers to make provision around fixture planning for example. Clearly, it also helps to get to know your colleagues and players better and to build stronger relationships.

ACKNOWLEDGE ANYONE OBSERVING RAMADAN

As with any religion, showing your Muslim colleagues or team members that you know it is a special time for them is likely to be appreciated.

Acknowledging Ramadan on your website (internal and external), within your team settings or on social media could be well received. For example, this could say:

'Ramadan Mubarak' to all our Muslim colleagues, friends and participants. Best wishes for the holy month of Ramadan'

You should also consider flexi-working for Muslim staff during Ramadan and accommodating leave for Eid.

¹ 'Happy' or 'blessed' Ramadan.

APPLY COURTESY AROUND FASTING TIMES

Unless there are specific reasons (e.g. pregnancy), Muslims are required to abstain from eating, drinking and smoking during the daylight hours of Ramadan. The fast is broken after sunset with the evening meal known as 'Iftar'.

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 at 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 building strong bonds.

You should be aware that fasting, combined with extra prayers (see below) and a lack of sleep may result in more tiredness and dehydration than normal. Many Muslims will find it harder to play football or concentrate on their work normally so please be sensitive to this.

APPLY COURTESY AROUND PRAYING TIMES

Muslims may practise their faith more during Ramadan and offer prayers during the day. This will normally be two to three times a day (during working hours) for a few minutes at a time when they will require a small, clean and private area.

Muslims may also attend extra prayers, known as 'Tarawih', during the night.

Whilst neither of the above may affect your footballing or meeting schedule, it's good to be aware, in case you need to make alternative arrangements.

MARKING THE END OF RAMADAN

The end of Ramadan is marked by Eid ul-Fitr, also known as the 'Festival of Breaking the Fast'. The day on which Eid falls will depend on the sighting of the moon therefore flexibility is necessary. Traditionally, Muslims will take time off for Eid, in the same way Christians would for Easter.

The appropriate way to express best wishes to a Muslim at Eid is to say **'Eid Mubarak'**.

||| *Muslims must be able to practise Ramadan safely and it is vital that those within football understand the importance of this holy month* |||



Layla Banaras, the first female player of South Asian heritage to play for Birmingham City W.F.C.'s first team.



The FA, faith and football: A game for all

Ensuring our national sport can be played by everyone is an immutable part of The FA's ethos. The game should always be For All.

To ensure this ethos applies to those with devout religious beliefs, The FA has a 'Faith and Football Group' comprising members of all the main world religions. It exists to advise The FA on any barriers to football that people of faith may experience – or perceive.

You can find out more about The FA's work in this area [here](#), where you will also find useful resources related to the faith spectrum.



England Blind Squad para player, Azeem Amir featuring in The FA's award winning Asian inclusion series 'Football and Me'.

To see more click [here](#).

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND CONTRIBUTION TO THIS YEAR'S RAMADAN GUIDANCE NOTES:



Reporting Discrimination

THE GRASSROOTS GAME, DISABILITY GAME, WOMEN'S PYRAMID AND THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM

To ensure our national game is inclusive, we all have a responsibility to step up and blow the whistle on discrimination. Here's how:

IF YOU'VE BEEN THE VICTIM OF OR WITNESSED AN INCIDENT OF DISCRIMINATION:

Report it via The FA at Football.ForAll@TheFA.com

Report it to Kick It Out through their [online reporting form](#) or via their reporting app available on both [iOS](#) and [Android](#).

Alternatively, email Kick It Out at report@kickitout.org

For grassroots football - complete the online form you'll find [here](#), which also goes to the County FA. You can also contact the County FA directly.

A full list of County FAs and contact details can be found [here](#).

Please note: If the incident occurs outside 'organised' football (i.e. in competitions not affiliated to the County FA), the County FA can still advise on what your next steps should be).

REPORTING DISCRIMINATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Whether it's in connection with professional or grassroots football, if you see a post on social media you believe is discriminatory, there are three ways to report it. These are:
By contacting the site on which the post exists – see more information below.

By reporting it to Kick It Out through [their online reporting](#) form or via their reporting app available on both [iOS](#) and [Android](#).

Alternatively, email Kick It Out at report@kickitout.org

By contacting the police, either:

- In person
- By calling the local police on 101
- By completing the online reporting form you'll find here
- By calling 999 if you are in an emergency



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