

RAMADAN GUIDANCE & SUPPORT 2023

GUIDANCE FOR CLUBS



TOGETHER



PREFACE

The EFL has worked in partnership with Muslim Chaplains in Sport to produce this guidance document, aimed at assisting clubs' understanding on the importance of Ramadan to those of the Muslim Faith.

The booklet details how clubs may best accommodate this religious practice for their Muslim footballers, staff and supporters, and explains the rulings, details and information surrounding Ramadan.

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

The English Football League (EFL) is the World's original league football competition. Its 72 member clubs embody the unique heritage, pride and passion of the communities that they represent, providing the gamewith a platform to become a global national and international success.

The EFL

In many instances, the EFL is at the forefront of society, bringing together people and communities across 72 Clubs. The League's unique reach and unprecedented impact, through a wide-ranging fanbase and global audience, allows the EFL to challenge behaviours and promote inclusive practices across the game.

The EFL wishes for its Clubs to be reflective and representative of their communities and be a driving force towards diversity across the country. To achieve its aims, the EFL requires a united vision and mission to make the game a truly reflective environment in which everyone can meet their full potential.

The establishment of the EFL's EDI Strategy 'Together' provides its Clubs and Communities a pathway to their own EDI journey in which the EFL can fully support and guide to allow for the achievement of its outcomes in a consistent and meaningful way.

The EFL is in the view that it will never complete its EDI journey and will always seek to re-address its path to ensure its ability to continuously challenge.

EDI Mission: The EFL establishes a best-in-class provision, uniting football to ensure inclusive and welcoming opportunities across the EFL environment through sustainable and effective change.

EDI Vision: The EFL and its Clubs are reflective and representative of the communities in which they serve at all levels of the game.

Muslim Chaplains in Sport

MCS is the only Muslim chaplaincy organisation in the country specialising in providing chaplaincy and confidential support to sporting individuals, organisations and governing bodies. MCS's services cater for all involved; from grassroots to senior management and first team players, including Academy scholars and staff.

To find out more about MCS or to request any of their services, contact them on:

Telephone: +44 (0) 121 737 9491

Email: info@mcst.org.uk

THE ISLAMIC MONTH OF FASTING

Ramadan

Ramadan is an Arabic word and name of the ninth month in the Islamic calendar when Muslims across the globe observe the ritual of a month long fast, each day from dawn to sunset (ie. daylight hours). The month of Ramadan lasts for a duration of 29 or 30 days and its start and end dates are determined by the sighting of the birth of a new moon.

When does Ramadan begin and end this year

Expected to start on/around Wednesday 22nd March 2023.

Expected to end on/around Friday 21st April 2023.

For how many hours per day will the fasts be observed?

The fasts are kept from before sunrise until the time of sunset. Therefore, depending on where the fast is observed, the hours of fasting will vary.

For instance, in the UK the day begins earlier in the spring and summer and ends later than other countries, so the fasts in UK will be considerably longer. A person keeping a fast in the UK may be fasting for up to 16/17 hours a day.

What marks the start and end of the day's fast?

Those observing the fast are encouraged to eat a pre-dawn meal known as 'Suhoor.' This meal will allow them to remain hydrated and physically fit enough to complete the fast for the day.

The ending of the fast is marked by a meal at sunset known as 'Iftaar,' which is seen as a celebratory meal and a reward for completing the fast. During this meal the families will normally sit together to eat and occasionally also invite close family, friends and neighbours to participate.

Who observes the fast and is it only food and drink they must abstain from?

Adult Muslims and all those who have reached the age of puberty are required to abstain from eating and drinking. In addition, smoking and intimate relationships are also forbidden. The obligation of fasting is lifted from those who are physically disabled, those who are incapable of making informed decisions, individuals who are travelling, pregnant, breast-feeding, menstruating and the very young.

If any individual who is required to fast, has not been able to observe, they may make up for it at any time once the month of Ramadan has ended (advisable to fast during breaks from games and the shorter winter months). If this is not possible for an Islamically compliant valid reason, then an amount equivalent to £5.00 may be given to the needy for each fast which has been missed. However, all efforts must be made to make up for any missed fasts.

Acknowledging and support those fasting
Islaam emphasises the need to respect and
acknowledge the rituals and religious beliefs of
others. Therefore, to show this to those
observing the fast would be seen as a good
gesture and mark of respect. Many non-
Muslims may support their fasting Muslim
colleagues by participating in a day's or part of
a day's fast, or even by participating in the meal
which breaks the fast at sunset. Also, just as
Muslims greet each other on the occasion of
the start of Ramadan, non-Muslim colleagues
may also greet by 'Ramadan Mubarak' or
'Ramadan Kareem,' which means 'have a
blessed Ramadan.'

Ramadan is more than just a month of fasting
to the many Muslims around the world. During
this month, not only do Muslims fast but rather
strive to carry out various additional deeds.
Below is information which will help you
understand Ramadan.

SECTION 3

GUIDANCE

Prayers

Performing prayers is essential and imperative in a Muslim's life. However, as Muslims tend to practice their faith more during Ramadan they may require time at certain periods of the day to carry out those extra prayers. For this they may request some additional time and a small allocated private place.

In addition, a special night prayer is conducted known as 'Taraweeh,' where portions of the Quraan are recited from memory by an Imaam in congregation. This may go on for up to two hours per night. To be able to balance the extra Ramadan worship with their professional career, all athletes must seek expert opinion and advise from a doctor.

Quraan

The month of Ramadan is also known as the month of the Quraan as Muslims believe that the revelation of the sacred text began during this month. To honour this, Muslims will tend to recite more portions of the Quraan than normal.

Charity

Charity plays a very important part in the Muslim faith and more so during Ramadan. Many Muslims will normally donate to charitable causes throughout the year but will save their Zakat (obligatory charity of a specified portion of one's wealth (with conditions) contribution to be paid during this month as it's believed that all deeds are multiplied in reward when carried out in Ramadan. MCS offer consultation to assist players in calculation of the Zakaat and also with distribution of it to our partner organisations within the UK.

How the end of Ramadan is celebrated

The end of Ramadan is determined by the sighting of the moon and marked by the festival of Eid, commencing with a special congregational prayer which is carried out after sunrise. The celebration of Eid is usually a vibrant and joyous time where families get together, exchange gifts and share food.

It would not be unusual to have non-Muslim friends invited to celebrate with them.

The special Eid prayer requires that it is performed in congregation and concluded by a small speech in Arabic. MCS chaplains are able to conduct this service at club facilities upon request.

A suggested message to those celebrating the festival of Eid:

"Eid Mubarak. Wishing all our Muslim friends a blessed and happy Eid."

SECTION 4

ADVICE FOR FOOTBALLERS FASTING DURING RAMADAN

Ramadan will coincide with the English football season for the next 25/26 years, it may prove difficult for footballers who are required to train, play games and fast. In the UK it will be particularly challenging due to the long duration of fasting required in the spring, which may be up to 16/17 hours per day.

The main issues are:

- Hydration
- Replacing glycogen (muscle energy stores)
- Replacing protein for muscle regeneration/healing
- Sleep and recovery

Normally a footballer would hydrate frequently, as even low levels of dehydration during training can have physiological consequences. A loss of 2% bodyweight (just 1.5kg for a 75kg person) is claimed to reduce performance by 10-20%. A player can easily lose this amount in a training session and even more in hot weather. A fluid loss greater than 3-5% bodyweight reduces aerobic exercise performance and impairs concentration and reaction time. A fasting footballer therefore needs to try and be well hydrated and energised before training and during the day. Since only two meals are eaten each day by a fasting person, the following is a guideline and suggested diet for footballers who may be fasting.

1. Suhoor

(pre-dawn meal taken to mark the start of a fast)

The main focus should be on carbohydrate foods that will release energy slowly over the day combined with small amount of foods that will release in the short to medium term.

Examples of slow release carbohydrates are non-starchy vegetables such as spinach, kale, tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumber, onions and asparagus. Sweet potato, pasta, nuts, fresh fruit and oats also release carbohydrates slowly. A whey protein should be consumed in preparation for the training and muscle repair. Examples of quick release carbohydrates are white rice, white potato, sugary drinks and dates.

As for fluids, plenty of isotonic fluids may be consumed as opposed to water – ideally 2-4 litres during the time when eating and drinking is allowed. This helps with the fluids being retained in the body as opposed to being released quickly through urinating. In addition, some extra electrolytes in a soluble tablet form may also be taken which can help with absorption of water.

2. Iftaar

(the meal which marks the opening of the fast at sunset)

A small amount of quick release carbohydrates is good and will make the player feel better quickly. A whey protein drink should also be consumed to help with muscle regeneration and recovery. Try not to eat a large meal immediately on opening the fast as the danger is that the body will be in 'storage mode' and will then try and store any excess food as fat. Have a small meal and then after a couple of hours have another meal focusing more on protein and slow release carbohydrate foods.

Managers, sports science and medical teams can also help players if they are able to agree on a training program whereby the load is reduced during Ramadan.

Some managers allow their players to only train in the morning if a double training session is scheduled and to do some other less strenuous gym work in the afternoon. However, this means it will be a long time before nutrition that helps with recovery can be consumed. Another option is that training can be held just before Iftaar to gain the maximum from recovery nutrition. However, training late means you don't maximise the benefits of the nutrition from Suhoor. This is why it is important to discuss with your medical team the best options for you, the team and how best to optimise recovery.

SECTION 5

QUESTIONS & SUPPORT

Should you require further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact the EFL Inclusion Team on:

Email: Inclusion@EFL.com

MCS offer workshops at clubs on the topic of Ramadan and fasting in which its rulings and laws are explained. Holding these workshops will help the non-Muslim members of your club understand and appreciate the stresses the fasting Muslim players may go through, and also help the medical team when preparing future planning and training schedules.

To request a workshop at your club please contact MCS.

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The EFL would like to thank Muslim Chaplains in Sport for their support and guidance in producing of the guidance.

