

# NUJUM

## *SPORTS*

Issue 02

Ramadan 1445 | March 2024



NUJUM

**UNITY,  
SACRIFICE, &  
COMMUNITY IN  
SPORTS**

Fadumo Olow

**INCLUSIVE  
EXCELLENCE**

Kim Pearce

[nujumsports.co.uk](http://nujumsports.co.uk)

**THE  
MONTH OF  
MERCY**

Wasim Kempson







Ramadan  
Kareem

O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as  
it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.  
-Surah Baqarah Ayah 183



# CONTENTS



08

The Month  
of Mercy



16

CRICKET:  
A CHANGING SPORT.

30 A Time for  
Reflection &  
Community



20

INCLUSIVE  
EXCELLENCE

32 Optimizing  
Performance

34 Troy  
Townsend

36 Unity  
Against  
Discrimination



22

A SPIRITUAL GUIDE FOR  
MUSLIM ATHLETES DURING  
RAMADAN



38

PROMOTING  
INCLUSIVITY  
& SUPPORT

06 Celebrating  
Faith &  
Reflection

24 Ambassadors

12 Cheshire County  
FA- Supporting  
Muslim Athletes

26 Watford & The  
Muslim Athlete  
Charter

18 QPR's  
Commitment  
To Inclusivity

28 Unity, Sacrifice,  
& Community In  
Sports

Chief Editor  
**Harun Rashid**  
Director of Community & EDI

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For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at [info@nujumsports.co.uk](mailto:info@nujumsports.co.uk) - FOA EBADUR RAHMAN



# CELEBRATING FAITH & REFLECTION



As the CEO of Nujum Sports, it is both an honour and a privilege to extend my heartfelt greetings to all readers of this special Ramadan magazine. This sacred month is a time for reflection, spiritual growth, and community, and it is with great joy that I share a few words on behalf of our organisation.

Nujum Sports stands at the forefront of a transformative movement in the realm of professional sports – one that resonates deeply with the values of inclusivity, diversity, and unity. Our commitment goes beyond the boundaries of the playing field; it extends to fostering an environment where Muslim athletes not only thrive but also serve as beacons of inspiration for generations to come.

In a world where diversity is celebrated, our dedication to supporting Muslim athletes is a testament to the belief that sports have the power to break down barriers and build bridges of understanding. Ramadan, with its emphasis on empathy, compassion, and perseverance, serves as a poignant backdrop to express the profound impact these athletes have on the global sports community.

Throughout our journey at Nujum Sports, we have witnessed the extraordinary resilience and dedication of Muslim athletes who navigate the demanding landscape of professional sports while upholding their faith. Their stories are tales of triumph over adversity, embodying the

spirit of Ramadan, where the discipline and self-control required on the field find resonance with the spiritual discipline observed during this blessed month.

Nujum Sports is more than an organisation; it is a community that recognises the importance of representation. We firmly believe that every aspiring Muslim athlete should have the opportunity to pursue their dreams without compromising their identity. In doing so, we contribute to a mosaic of diversity within the sports world, enriching it with the unique perspectives and talents of those who proudly carry the values instilled in them by their faith.

As we celebrate Ramadan, we also celebrate the strength that emerges from unity. The support system provided by Nujum Sports extends beyond the individual athlete; it encompasses families, communities, and fans who rally behind these sportspeople, recognising the significance of their journey and the positive impact it has on the broader society.

In the spirit of this holy month, let us come together to acknowledge and appreciate the Muslim athletes who, through their dedication, skill, and integrity, illuminate the path for others to follow. May their stories serve as a source of inspiration for all, fostering a deeper understanding of the shared humanity that unites us, regardless of our backgrounds. In closing, I extend my gratitude to the readers of this magazine for embracing the narratives of Muslim athletes and recognizing the power of sports to transcend cultural and religious boundaries.

May this Ramadan be a time of reflection, growth, and unity, both on and off the playing field.

Wishing you all a blessed and joyous Ramadan.

Sincerely,

Ebadur Rahman  
Founder & CEO  
Nujum Sports

**FASTING IS AN  
ABANDONMENT OF  
THOSE THINGS THAT  
THE SOUL LOVES AND  
DESIRES, PREFERRING  
INSTEAD ALLAH'S LOVE  
AND CONTENTMENT.**



# THE MONTH OF MERCY

Imam Wassim

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 in which Allah ﷻ 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 Him.

Ramadan is the month to revitalise 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 from the hellfire, 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)

## FASTING IS AN ABANDONMENT OF THOSE THINGS THAT THE SOUL LOVES AND DESIRES, PREFERRING INSTEAD ALLAH'S LOVE AND CONTENTMENT.

The Prophet pbuh is also reported to have said, "Whoever prays during 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 al Baqarah, Ayah 183] May Allah make us from those who are accepted and grant us success in both worlds  
Ameen





# HUSSAIN FOUNDATION


CHARITY • EDUCATION • JUSTICE

We are a charitable foundation set up in memory of **Hussain Chaudhry** who tragically passed away on 17 March 2021 whilst defending his family, home and honour from cowardly robbers armed with knives who had come to rob the jackets that Hussain used to sell. We pray that Allah (swt) accept him as a Shaheed (Ameen).

Please show your support and find out more by following us at:

 [hussain.foundation](https://hussain.foundation)  [@hussainfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/hussainfoundation)  [@hussainfndn](https://twitter.com/hussainfndn)

As Hussain loved fashion, we have also continued his business through the establishment of **Green Bird Apparel**. All of the profits from this brand go to supporting the running of the Hussain Foundation. Check out our collections at:

 [greenbirdapparel.com](https://greenbirdapparel.com)  [@greenbirdapparel](https://www.instagram.com/greenbirdapparel)





# CHESHIRE COUNTY FA– SUPPORTING MUSLIM ATHLETES.

**Steve Smithies**  
CEO, Cheshire FA



Cheshire FA was the first County FA to sign the Muslim Athletes Charter, something we are very proud of. As the sphere of competitive sports continues to diversify, it becomes essential to develop an environment of inclusivity that respects and supports athletes from all backgrounds, including Muslims. Muslim athletes, like all athletes, bring their unique cultural and religious practices to the field, and these must be acknowledged and supported properly to ensure fair play and equality.

At Cheshire FA we believe that support begins with a deep understanding and respect for the faith and practices of Muslim athletes. Islam prescribes a way of life that includes daily prayers, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and wearing modest attire, among other observances. Educating coaches, team members, and sports organizations about these practices can help create an empathetic and supportive environment. We have hugely benefitted from the workshops that Ebs has run for us, as this has made us better equipped to support our Muslim footballers, athletes and their families.

As a result of our collaboration with Nujum Sports we now also support grassroots clubs in encouraging them to provide a clean, quiet space for prayer within their facilities so they can help Muslim footballers fulfil their religious obligations without stress or disruption. Scheduling flexibility around prayer times, particularly during important matches or training sessions, demonstrates respect for these religious needs.

During Ramadan, adult Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food and drink. This can impact on players performance and recovery. Our local clubs and coaches should work with Muslim athletes to adjust training and competition schedules when possible or to provide nutritional support that aligns with the timings of Suhoor (pre-dawn meal) and Iftar (meal after sunset) to aid performance and recovery.

Dietary laws are important in Islam, with certain foods being halal (permissible) and others being haram (forbidden). Ensuring access to halal food options at sporting events and in team diets is a fundamental way to support Muslim athletes. Our Cheshire based sports events and team organizers should consider partnering with certified halal food providers.

Major events, games, and tournaments should avoid scheduling conflicts with significant Islamic holidays, just as they typically do for other religious or national observances. This reduces the chances of Muslim athletes having to choose between their faith and their sport.

Visibility of Muslim athletes in sports is empowering and serves as inspiration for up-and-coming athletes. Mentorship programs that pair young Muslim athletes with experienced ones can provide guidance and support while also breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions.

Our work with Nujum ensure that we are part of a continuous education programme around cultural competency and the challenges that Muslim athletes may face. Workshops, seminars, and advocacy campaigns can ensure these topics remain at the forefront of our policies and ensure that everyone involved in the our football community is aware and informed.

Working with Nujum ensure that supporting Muslim footballers and athletes in Cheshire is not just about fairness; it's about enriching the sports community with diversity, education and resilience. When we acknowledge and accommodate the religious practices and cultural norms of all athletes, the level of competition improves, and the spirit of sportsmanship is strengthened. As sports continue to unite people across different religions and cultures, it is imperative that inclusivity remains a guiding principle on and off the field.

Thanks to the amazing work that Nujum Sports do in making sport and football and inclusive space ForAll.





*"And establish prayer and give Zakat, and whatever good you put forward for yourselves – you will find it with Allah."*

[Qur'an 2:110]

## Donate your Zakat to Islamic Relief

Established in 1984, Islamic Relief has since become a trusted distributor of Zakat to people in 34 countries around the world. We strive to ensure that your Zakat empowers millions of people each year, who are eligible to receive it, bringing them out of the difficult circumstances they are in. Every day, our teams see the power of your Zakat and the difference it makes in their lives.

By giving your Zakat to Islamic Relief, your donations are used in the most effective way possible to alleviate the suffering of the world's most vulnerable people. They receive your Zakat in the form of medicines, education materials, food supplies, nutritional supplements, hygiene kits, water distributions, shelter kits, sustainable income, and emergency relief.

**We are serious about Zakat, because we are accountable to you, to all those who have a right to receive it, and – most importantly – to Allah.**

## What is Zakat?

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, along with prayer, fasting, pilgrimage (Hajj) and belief in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (SAW). For every sane, adult Muslim who owns wealth over a certain amount – known as the Nisab – he or she must pay 2.5% of that wealth as Zakat.

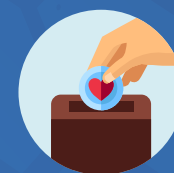
Zakat is a means for us to draw closer to Allah's pleasure and build towards our afterlife. It is a clear right that the poor and disadvantaged have over us, and an opportunity for us to fulfil our global responsibility to care for those who are most vulnerable.



We are proud to be the official Ramadan 2024 charity partners for Nujum Sports

## Who receives Zakat?

The Qur'an [9:60] specifies eight categories of people who qualify to receive Zakat:



The Poor



The Needy



Those in Slavery



The Debt-Ridden



The Destitute Traveller



Those Whose Hearts are to be Reconciled



Zakat Administrators



In the Way of Allah

A poor person is someone whose property, in excess of his basic requirements, does not reach the Nisab threshold.

## Scholar Verification

Our Zakat fund is shari'ah compliant. As with everything we do, we strive to be both purposeful and true. We are working closely with qualified scholars and an Independent Zakat Advisory Board to make sure that our Zakat policy is in strict accordance with what Allah has ruled. Your Zakat is an Amanah (trust), and when you entrust us to distribute it carefully and correctly, we take that trust very seriously.

An Independent Zakat Advisory Board, made up of a group of respected scholars, have ratified our Zakat policy and will provide oversight and verification of the distribution of Zakat by Islamic Relief. They ensure clear guidance is in place on how Zakat should be fundraised, allocated, distributed and monitored.

## Download your free Zakat Toolkit

**When it comes to Zakat, there's a wealth of information out there, and it can be difficult to know exactly what we need to do. So, we've put together a Scholar Verified Zakat Toolkit with everything you'll need to know!**



Please scan this QR code to download your free copy!



# CRICKET: A CHANGING SPORT.

**Kate Miller**  
Chief Communications Officer  
ECB

We're Incredibly  
Pleased To Be Working  
With Nujum. Creating  
The Conditions For  
True Change Is  
Hard And Require  
Empathy, Commitment  
And Understanding  
– Something That  
Ebs And The Team  
Consistently Bring.

A year in sport always seems to pass by faster than 'normal' time. There's something about the ebb of the year that means we push through planning, delivery, review and back again so much faster than other industries I've worked in.

Over the past 12 months, aside from hosting record-breaking Men's and Women's Ashes series, our England teams competing in Men's and Women's World Cups and a World Blind Games, and staging a bumper domestic season – plus so much more we have to do as a governing body – we also received the report by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC), a seminal report into the cultures that exist within cricket. The report, as most will know, identified the discriminations that exist within our sport. Notably, classism, racism and sexism.

These are words that, as we all know, should not hold space in a sport that should welcome everyone, benefit all, and bring joy to those who wish to partake in it.

It wasn't a moment to feel proud of our sport, reading some of the harrowing lived experiences and pain that people carry, many of them several decades later. But it was a moment I hope we will look back on in years to come as being critical in cricket becoming a more inclusive and welcoming place.

The report, and its work, and its testimonies will now provide the backdrop of work that has already begun in earnest. Work that will begin to narrow the opportunity gap between state and public-school cricket, work that will educate and prevent discrimination, work that will ultimately remove the gender gap. There will be many more interventions and changes that will unpick the fabric of a sport that has been centuries in the making. We will not get it all right immediately, and we will

make mistakes along the way. It will take time to see the true impacts of change in some of the action which cricket takes, but I have no doubt that we are a sport that is transforming.

To share some of the specific change, if we look at the leadership base across cricket, since 2019 the demographics of Directors on County Boards have moved from 11% to 34% for women, and from 5% to 19% for those who are ethnically diverse. In schools' cricket, we have increased our investments to £4m annually to support the delivery of cricket in state schools so that we are reaching 670,000 children across 7,500 schools, working with every County Cricket Board across England and Wales. And in women's and girls' cricket we have seen a 600% increase in investment in women's playing salaries in addition to a 75% increase in women's and girls' club teams in four years.

Working in partnership with others is the key to progress. By working with the African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) Programme and the South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA) we are breaking down barriers to ethnically diverse players realising their potential. Or even just picking up a bat and ball in the first place. We are funding other charity partners Chance to Shine and the Lord's Taverners to provide free cricket in state schools with high numbers of children on free school meals, and for pupils with special educational needs. And with the MCC Foundation we are providing more opportunities for talented state school cricketers to get onto talent pathways.

Off-pitch, education work remains key if we are to reduce discrimination in the first place and to build a more tolerant and welcoming sport. This year, our partnerships with Nujum and Inclusive Partners continue to support growth in knowledge and understanding, along with some of the technical skills required to create more inclusive and nurturing environments.

Before we know it, the new cricket season will be upon us. I think the critical thing we must all strive for in the coming years is that change should be the only constant. While the journey along the way will undoubtedly bring about challenges and adjustments, building a more inclusive and diverse cricket culture is vital if the sport is to be successful and thrive into the future. That's why there's no bigger priority.





# QPR'S COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVITY

**Alex Carroll**  
- QPR

My name is Alex Carroll and I am the Academy Director at QPR. I have been with the Club since 2014 and have held my current role for 6 years.

I was first introduced to Ebadur and Nujum Sports through our Assistant Head of Coaching, Manisha Tailor.

The support Nujum Sports have provided for our Muslim players and staff has been outstanding.

For the last 3 years, Nujum Sports have distributed Ramadan packs to players and staff right through our Academy & First Team. Our staff were then educated on the importance of organising breaks during evening training sessions at the Academy to allow our players to break their fast.

Nujum Sports have also delivered important educational sessions for our staff on Ramadan Awareness & Islamophobia Awareness, allowing us all to better understand how we can support our colleagues & players. During our most recent workshop, we were extremely proud to observe our U18 & Development Squad players leading on the delivery. The sessions

have also prompted impactful conversations at the training ground, providing a platform for our players to share the importance of their faith with their team-mates.

Since September 2022, Nujum Sports have also assisted us with the organisation of Friday Prayers at our Training Ground (the first Football club in the world to have this facility). This allows our staff and players to practice their faith without compromising their education or training programmes.

Many staff and players have shared how much of an impact the Friday Prayer sessions have had, knowing that their faith is valued by the Club. We place immense value on creating an open environment that allows everyone connected with the Club to flourish. I would strongly recommend that other clubs research the feasibility of organising Friday prayers at their training facilities.

We very much look forward to developing our relationship with Nujum Sports in the future.



# INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

## NUJUM SPORTS' CONTRIBUTION TO LUTON TOWN'S ATHLETIC COMMUNITY

**Kim Pearce**  
**Senior Safeguarding Manager**  
**Luton Town Football Club**

It is always an honour to work with Nujum Sports, both personally and professionally.

When I arrived Luton Town, I had been working with Nujum on other projects in other sports and naturally brought them with me.

Ebadur Rahman was one of the first people I called to say I had taken the role.

Firstly because of his unwavering support to me personally and secondly because I knew I wanted to introduce Nujum to the club as soon as possible to make sure we were getting the right support and guidance for our Muslim athletes and staff and our wider community.

The location of our stadium and demographic of our neighbours and community was something I wanted to make sure we embraced and understood.

The sessions they provided gave our staff a safe space to talk about their own journeys as Muslim and the difficulties they had encountered, it was a fantastic opportunity for us to look at how we could better support our staff and players.

Luton have welcomed Nujum into our Academy for the last two seasons, delivering to our staff, players, their

parents and guardians and host families.

The input, training, support, and Ramadan boxes are given free of charge, meaning all clubs and sports regardless of level or funding can access the services, which is what makes Nujum so special.

The support Nujum offer our players who suffer racist abuse is always there, the first organisations to reach out to us as a club as always Nujum and Kick it out. Troy Townsend becoming an ambassador at Nujum made it even more special to us as a club as we then got to benefit from his knowledge and advice, Of course, the fact that his son Andros now plays in our first team means we see a lot more of him which we count as a blessing.

Ramadan at Luton has evolved in the last two seasons with Nujum Sport's support. Our Muslim Athletes have teammates and staff who are knowledgeable about how to support them during the Holy Month.

Food being available at the right time, travel arrangements planned around prayer times. Ensuring our players can Fast, Pray and Reflect during the holy month. All considered with Nujum's support.

The Boxes that Nujum provide us show the athletes that we recognise their faith and support them, Our Muslim coaches and staff met with our Academy Players when the boxes arrived and sat with them to talk about Ramadan and how they can use the boxes during training.

A fantastic opportunity for the players and staff to come together, sharing their first Iftar at our training ground.

I feel personally incredibly lucky that I have travelled Nujum Sport's journey of growth with them. And to see how much that growth means to more Muslim athletes across the UK and now into Europe and beyond makes me feel proud and honoured to be a part of their journey.

I am sure that they will continue to support more Muslim Athletes in 2024 Inshallah



# NURTURING THE SOUL: A SPIRITUAL GUIDE FOR MUSLIM ATHLETES DURING RAMADAN.

**Sheikh Dr. Sajid Umar**  
Faith Adviser  
Nujum Sports



## **Introduction:**

Ramadan, a blessed month of fasting, prayer, and reflection, offers Muslim athletes a unique opportunity to strengthen their spiritual connection while juggling the demands of their sporting careers. This blog focuses on the spiritual aspects of Ramadan, emphasising mindfulness of the wisdoms of fasting and providing ideas and inspiration for athletes seeking a deep connection with God.

## **Suhoor :**

**A Mindful Commencement:**  
Approach suhoor mindfully, acknowledging it as more than a bodily necessity. In the quiet minutes before morning, consider the knowledge of self-discipline and control that fasting imparts. Suhoor becomes a religious rite, connecting your intentions to the fundamental purpose of Ramadan. Fasting develops self-discipline

and raises awareness of the need of managing one's desires and actions, a wisdom that transcends the physical domain.

## **Hydration:**

**Gratitude and Moderation:**  
While staying hydrated is important for physical health, do it in moderation and with thankfulness. Recognise that by refraining from constant consuming, you represent both the wisdom of recognising the blessings of sustenance and the virtue of self-control.

The act of abstaining from water during fasting hours acts as a reminder of the value of moderation and gratitude for the modest benefits that keep us going.

## **Prayer as a Guiding Light:**

Incorporate prayer into your

workout programme, treating it as a guiding light that illuminates your path. After all, the help you require to succeed will come from the Divine you bow down to during the prayer! The wisdom of combining physical activity and spiritual commitment lies in the harmonious union of body and soul.

## **The Wisdom of Fasting:**

Fasting promotes a holistic approach to worship, in which the bodily and spiritual components are connected, encouraging equilibrium and peace.

## **Iftar : Breaking the Fast in Presence:**

As you break your fast, exemplify the knowledge of being in the present moment. Begin with dates and water, as the prophetic tradition suggests, and then pray and give gratitude. This act of nutrition goes beyond the physical; it is a spiritual journey of gratitude and attentiveness.

**Wisdom of Iftar:** Breaking the fast deliberately emphasises the importance of being present, cultivating an awareness that extends beyond the act of eating to a deeper appreciation for the blessings of nourishment, allowing a person to reflect on

the plight of those who must fast continuously due to a lack of food or drink on a regular basis.

## **Night Prayers and Reflection:**

**A Spiritual Journey**  
Incorporate additional prayers and moments of reflection into your nighttime routine. This period of quiet introspection allows you to tap into the spiritual blessings of the night, seeking forgiveness, setting spiritual goals, and drawing closer to the divine through important acts of worship that are unique to the nights of Ramadan.

As Muslim athletes embrace the spiritual aspects of Ramadan, reflecting on the wisdom of fasting enriches the trip. Through self-discipline, thankfulness, moderation, and presence, athletes can embody Ramadan's profound teachings. May this month be a period of significant spiritual growth, in which your athletic endeavours become acts of worship and your devotion serves as a source of strength development and inspiration for the heart, mind and soul. Ramadan Kareem!





# AMBASSADORS



**Moeen Ali OBE**

England and Warwickshire CCC



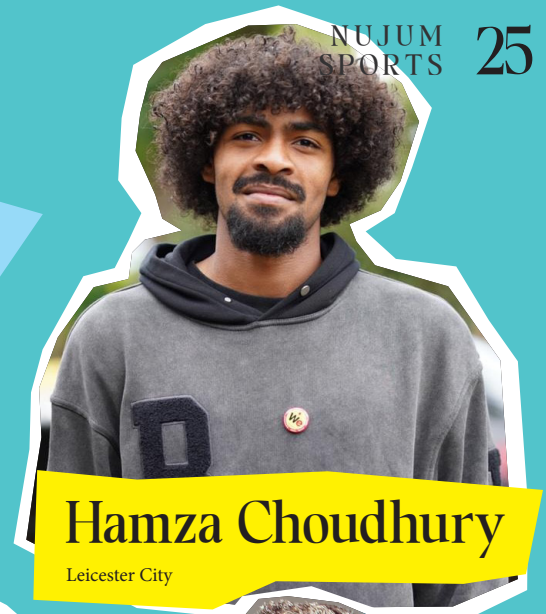
**Adil Rashed MBE**

England and Yorkshire CCC



**Taofiq Olomowewe**

Boxhill United FC



**Hamza Choudhury**

Leicester City



**Saqib Mahmood**

Lancashire CCC and England



**Huzaifah Iqbal**

Boxing Coach



**Adama Traore**

Fulham FC and Spain



**Abtaha Maqsood**

Sunrisers and Scotland



**Sam Morsy**

Ipswich Town and Egypt



**Khadijah Mellah**

Jockey



**Adi Yussuf**

Banbury United and Tanzania



**Rayan Kolli**

QPR FC





# Watford FC

# WATFORD & THE MUSLIM ATHLETE CHARTER

**Dave Messenger**

EDI Lead, Watford FC

As the first club to sign Nujum Sports' Muslim Athletes Charter in October 2021, it's a great privilege to be asked to contribute to this magazine for the holy month of Ramadan.

As a club, we take great pride in being at the forefront of football's drive to be fully inclusive, something we've been doing since Graham Taylor and Sir Elton John joined forces in the 1970s and 80s to put Watford FC on the map as the original family and community club. Nujum Sports are truly part of our community, and our relationship continues to go from strength to strength.

During Ramadan last year it was our pleasure to host Nujum's athlete Iftar at our stadium. The event was one of two Iftar's held at the club in 2023, making the Hornets the first club to host two different Iftar events in the same holy month. The two were attended by over 200 people across the two evenings.

We were also grateful for expert guidance from Nujum when opening our new multi-faith reflection room at our training ground this summer, having already done the same at our stadium in 2021. Plans are already in place for a third facility which will open soon, based in the tunnel at Vicarage Road, with Nujum's support again at the forefront of our plans.

During Islamophobia Awareness month, we called upon the expertise at Nujum to provide Islamophobia Awareness training for staff, and this November our women's team took part in a session, another first for Nujum Sports. We are also grateful for the regular advice we receive on how

best to support our players spiritual needs, as well as advice for our coaching staff and nutritionists during the fasting period of Ramadan.

The club's internal EDI working group were delighted to welcome Ebadur Rahman to one of their regular meetings. Members of the group from across all departments of the club were able to hear the story of how Nujum Sports got started, as well as finding out more about the goals and objectives of the Muslim athlete's charter.

It was also a memorable day at the Nujum Sports Awards in August, with the club receiving two nominations and the club's EDI Lead, Dave Messenger, winning the Ambassador for Change award. Dave was selected by the panel for positively changing the culture for professional Muslim athletes within their sporting environment.

On receiving the award, Dave said: "I was thrilled to be presented with the Ambassador for Change award by Nujum Sports. I've learned so much about the Muslim faith from the team at Nujum and our local community partners, and I look forward to continuing the great work we've done together."

Plans are already afoot for the future as our partnership, which we value incredibly highly, continues to flourish, as do our Muslim players. Nujum Sports give us the confidence and knowledge to deliver on our commitment to our Muslim players, staff, supporters and local community throughout the year, and especially during Ramadan.

From all of the players, officials and staff at Watford FC – Ramadan Mubarak!



# UNITY, SACRIFICE, & COMMUNITY IN SPORTS

"Not even water?", undoubtably a question many Muslims will be asked throughout the month of Ramadan.

The question, tinged with curiosity and surprise, is simple. Nonetheless, it doesn't come without its complexity.

Because for many of us, the blessed month of Ramadan is about everything but water.

The focus is God-consciousness. It's about togetherness, patience, charity, empathy, and self-reflection.

The focus is God-consciousness. It's about togetherness, patience, charity, empathy, and self-reflection.

Many of those principles are not exclusive to Muslims. In fact, football and particularly media isn't too big to take these lessons on board, either.

The introduction of Nujum Sport couldn't more pertinent. In an industry where expectations on players continue to increase both on and off the pitch.

Nujum's ability to build a well grounded community that brings together athletes, particularly through Ramadan is hugely appreciated. It's evident of the mutual understanding and support shown to athletes and their wider community.

It's also a reminder that sport doesn't come without its sacrifices and for many, that biggest sacrifice is family.

The constant relocation and unsociable hours mean that many inevitably create a home away from home. Therefore, simple consideration from us as a collective, without the need for request is hugely important. It's why the introduction of Open Iftaars at Premier League grounds, Ramadan Midnight football leagues and Ramadan packs provided by Nujum are indispensable.

However, the responsibility doesn't exclusively fall on a few. Those in the media, including myself, have responsibility to educate, inform and celebrate all players, regardless of faith and background.

It's why as a journalist, story telling couldn't be more important. Once the caffeine deprivation fades and a routine is formed, it's by far my favourite time of year.

Sharing stories from players, fans and the wider football community on why Ramadan is important to them.

If anything, those conversation reignite a passion that football is not far removed from that lessons that can be taken from this month.

Those of you who observe the month of Ramadan should be able to find solace in your experiences. Similarly, as athletes you can influence and inspire. efore encourage you all to celebrate with one another and share your story.

Visibility and representation in football is essential, now more than ever.

"None of you will believe until you love for your brother what you love for yourself." - Prophet Mohamed (PBUH)

**Fadumo Olow**  
Reporter, Sky Sports



# A TIME FOR REFLECTION & COMMUNITY

Ahmed Shooble



Being a Muslim in the West can be complicated. On the one hand, there are deeply Islamophobic corners of the countries we live in that we encounter on a daily basis. But on the other hand, most of us are able to fulfil the dreams of our parents, build our own communities and - perhaps most importantly - use our privilege to give back in any way we can.

**It is an opportunity to be the highest versions of ourselves. To visit the elderly neighbour who lives on their own.**

That is why Ramadan is so special to me - it's the month of giving. Giving money to charity. Giving thanks to Allah. Giving time to strengthen your deen. In a country like the UK where you can sometimes feel like an outsider for practising your religion, Ramadan offers us a chance to come together and reset. To encourage one another through the difficulties of protecting your fast and increasing your imaan.

It is a period of reflection and self-improvement, but also a chance to show the rest of the world the beauty this blessed month can bring. In the last few years, we have seen football clubs open their doors to host huge iftars and prayers and the Premier League granting its Muslim players the chance to break their fast during a match. Both show the progress that is being made while also planting the seed of curiosity for non-Muslims to learn about Islam through the holiest month in the Islamic calendar.

In these trying times, the responsibility for us to be the best Muslims we can be in every aspect of our lives is at an all-time high - especially during Ramadan. It is an opportunity to be the highest versions of ourselves. To visit the elderly neighbour who lives on their own. To invite the revert who just became Muslim to iftar. To volunteer to whatever initiative is closest to your heart. To give within your means without expecting anything in return. To cleanse your minds, your tongues and your hearts.

At VERSUS, we champion culture, cultivating communities and giving back in the most thoughtful of ways. Seeing what Nujum has done in nurturing the wellbeing of Muslim athletes through these Ramadan Packs is deeply inspirational and very much in harmony with our core values. Their contribution to the understanding of Islam within the sports industry not only makes me feel proud to be Muslim in a very non-Muslim space, but it also helps to create an environment more accommodating to our faith.

I, like many others, will be using this month to remind myself how fortunate I am and how much I have to improve. To make it to another Ramadan is a blessing and to be able to contribute to Nujum's amazing work is a privilege. Ramadan Kareem to you all and I hope this month gives you everything you need and more insha'Allah!  
Ahmed Shooble



# Optimizing Performance

## Guidance for Muslim Athletes Fasting During Ramadan in Football

**Dr Zafar Iqbal**

Consultant in Sports and Exercise Medicine

Head of Sports Medicine and Performance Arsenal FC

In 2024 Ramadan will start around the 10th March and end 29-30 days later and during which many Muslim athletes across the world will be continuing to compete. This can particularly be challenging for those footballers who are required to train and / or play games while fasting, especially in the UK where the fasts can be over 17 hours. Below is some general guidance to consider that can be adapted to the athletes, their sport, the duration of the daily fast, and the environmental conditions.

The main issues for athletes who are fasting while training or competing are:

Hydration

Nutrition

Sleep + Recovery

### HYDRATION

All athletes need to be well hydrated during activity as even low levels of dehydration during training can have physiological as well as cognitive consequences. A loss of 2% bodyweight (just 1.5kg for a 75kg person) is claimed to reduce physical performance by 10-20%. A fluid loss greater than 3-5% bodyweight, reduces aerobic exercise performance and impairs concentration and reaction time. A fasting footballer therefore needs to be well hydrated and energised before training and during the day. 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. Drinking large quantities of fluid could result counter productive. Rather prefer, consuming around 200ml every 30 min in a consistent way during the dark hours (night) during Ramadan. 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. Avoid caffeine and tea whenever possible as they can act as a diuretic and increase fluid loss.

To reduce the loss of fluid through sweating, cooling strategies can be employed during training such as the use

of cold towels. Post sessions the use of a cold shower or plunge pool will assist in cooling down and therefore help reduce fluid loss. Likewise, except for the training sessions or matches, players should avoid exposing themselves to hot/humid environment during the daylight.

### NUTRITION

While fasting the athlete can not consume any food or fluid between the hours of sunlight from Pre-dawn to sunset. Therefore to optimise the performance and recovery for the player, special consideration should be given to the meals at Suhoor and Iftar:

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

Main focus during Suhoor should be on carbohydrates that will release energy slowly over the day combined with a 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 and asparagus. Sweet Potato, pasta, Nuts, fresh fruit and oats / porridge also release carbohydrates slowly. A whey protein should be consumed in preparation for training and muscle repair.

Iftar (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. Examples of quick release carbohydrates are white rice, white potato, sugary drinks and dates. A whey protein drink should also be consumed to help with the muscle regeneration and recovery. Try not to eat a large meal immediately on opening the fast as the danger is that the body is in 'storage mode' at that moment, and will then try and store any excess food as fat. To avoid over consumption at Iftar, it is advised that players have a small meal and then after one or two hours have another meal focusing more on protein and slow-release carbohydrate foods. The way of breaking the fast will obviously have to be adapted to an eventual evening upcoming training session or match.

### SLEEP

Sleep is extremely important for recovery and repair and can be disturbed during Ramadan with players waking up early morning for Suhoor and staying up late after Iftar. It would be advised to get an idea of the duration and quality of the sleep by monitoring using Wellness Questionnaire / sleep Apps / devices. It is also recommended to have a nap during the day around late afternoon for at least 45 minutes. Naps could be long if the quantity/quality of sleep during the night has been judged insufficient by the player and/or the supporting staff.

Managers, Sports Science and Medical Team can also help players if they are able to agree on a training program which minimises fatigue, performance and optimises recovery and sleep. Some managers allow their players to train in the morning only if there has been a double training scheduled and do some other gym work which is less strenuous in the afternoon. However, this means that it will be a long time before nutrition that helps with recovery can be consumed. Another option is that training can be done just before Iftar to gain the maximum from recovery nutrition. However, training late means players don't maximise the benefits of the nutrition from Suhoor. Importantly, night training sessions can be very intensive, as performed in a fed state when the players can consume fluids to rehydrate. This is why it is important for the multi-disciplinary team and the player to discuss the best options for the player, the team and how best to optimise nutrition, hydration and recovery. Supporting staff should first investigate if any of their players are supposed to fast during Ramadan and in such case, openly discuss the matter with them.

A supporting attitude towards the Muslim fasting players will reinforce the trust between the players and their surroundings and help them better cope with the challenge of performing while fasting.



# TROY TOWNSEND MBE



Very proud and extremely privileged is how I would like to summarise this year with Nujum Sports. Year on year in its short career the organisation is proving invaluable for its beneficiaries, its influence on the main stage continues to grow and its future is extremely positive.

## AN ORGANISATION THAT HAS OPENED MY EYES, DESPITE NEARLY 40 YEARS IN FOOTBALL AND HAS PROVED TO ME THAT YOU NEVER STOP LEARNING.

I wanted to share some highlights, many you may know but it's also important to continually recognise. An organisation designed to enable Muslim athletes to feel confident, supported and flourish with all the difficulties and challenges that they face in their day to day field of sporting excellence. Challenges that I'm sure anyone reading this, will have experienced or will be more than aware of. Nujum have provided a safety net for all those athletes to be valued but the growth from those initial stages has been amazing to witness and also to play a major part in.

An initial scoping conversation led to a visit to the KNVB Campus in the Netherlands. Dutch football wanted to be more proactive around diversity and inclusion and within that its support for Muslim athletes was a key

denominator. Then a visit to Paris ensued again with that premise of raising awareness of Nujum to a new and much wider audience. Finally a second visit to the Netherlands as the connection grew stronger. The power of these new connections in different countries secured Nujum objective of growth.

I think one of the most important and reflective times in the position I have with Nujum was a strategic think tank day with other members of the board spent over two days. The couple of days with like minded members with a clear appreciation of the positive nature of the organisation, confirmed to me the status that Nujum holds but the continued statement of intent for all involved.

It would also be remiss not to mention the power of the education that the organisation provides across football, cricket and rugby, the surge of bookings have develop an understanding that these sports are very open to historical education, support for their athletes and raised awareness for senior officials.

I wanted to keep this piece about focusing on the positives and the influence that Nujum has. I hold the position I have dearly and am extremely grateful of the way I have been embraced by the brothers and sisters of the Nujum family..

But we can never ignore the challenges that our Muslim athletes have faced this year alone but i promise you, we grow together and in confidence that Nujum Sports will be there for when ever and how ever you require.

Here's to more overwhelming success for all our beneficiaries this year and look forward to seeing you all across some of the upcoming events that Nujum will host.

**Troy Townsend MBE**  
Nujum Sports  
Special Advisor





# UNITY AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

**Maamun Hajmahmoud**  
Player Engagement Officer, Kick It Out



Asalaam wa'alaikum,

For those of you who don't already know, my name is Maamun, I work as a Player Engagement Officer at football's anti-racism & discrimination organisation, Kick It Out.

ONE OF THE  
BIGGEST AND MOST  
IMPORTANT PARTS  
OF FASTING, WHILST  
TRAINING AND  
PLAYING I HAVE  
FOUND OVER THE  
YEARS IS HYDRATION.

As a Player Engagement team at Kick It Out, our main objective is to act as a means of support to players in the professional academy and semi-professional/professional first-team set-ups of youth and senior football.

One of the ways in which we do this is via delivery of educational workshops on the topic of racism & discrimination, particularly within the academy system.

In our day-to-day roles, we would often come across Muslim players, who didn't know there was support available to them regarding their faith. They may have also felt uncomfortable disclosing their faith because of historic Islamophobic sentiment within football environments they've been involved in, in the past.

Whilst we would be able to offer support to those players around discriminatory incidents, we were limited in how much we could support them further around their faith needs.

Therefore it's been really beneficial that since we began collaborating with Nujum in 2021, we have been able to signpost them here so that their needs as Muslim athletes can be seen to. These

needs in our experience have varied from seeking faith advice and support, to networking with other Muslim players.

In terms of education, we've done a lot of great work together, doing joint deliveries of racism and Islamophobia workshops at Premier League clubs, to travelling Europe spreading awareness on the work we do in countries such as the Netherlands and France.

With regards to issues of discrimination, unfortunately the nature of football and society in general, indicates that it is an evil that will always show its ugly face.

It's our job as an organisation to meet it head on, call it out and to hold the perpetrators of this abuse to account via notifying relevant football and non-football authorities.

In the couple of years in which we've been working together, we've been able to successfully report many cases of Islamophobic and racist abuse to the FA and police with the help of Nujum.

Whilst not always receiving the intended outcome, these reports show that we take abuse of Muslim players incredibly seriously and will never stop trying to fight this hatred. If we stop reporting these incidents, it will do nothing to combat the rise of Islamophobia which we are currently witnessing.

We recognise and applaud Nujum's ability to bring so many athletes together so consistently, particularly during Ramadan. It is testament to the rapport and trust they've managed to harbour from you. In an industry where many are always seeking from players, Nujum are simply there to give.

We urge you as players to continue utilising their services as they are the best in the professional sports industry at what they do, don't take them for granted.

We also want to continue being of added value to Nujum and to yourselves as athletes, so never hesitate in reaching out to us should you feel the need to.



# PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY & SUPPORT

Recognising and support staff, players, and volunteers from all levels of the game has been a key focus for Essex, over the past 10 years. We have built up strong relationships with partners and stakeholders who have enabled us to gather insight and knowledge in several ways to support every individual to reach their potential whilst being able to follow their chosen beliefs.

Specifically linking into Ramadan, the community groups, we have engaged with along with players and staff have helped us to develop a flexible offer that provides not only support but guidance for all involved with Cricket, key areas we have worked on over time has been.

Developed the relationship with Nujum to offer education, guidance, and support for staff, The flexibility to move fixtures within the recreational game, The development of a multi faith room, Supported the funding of a PHD Study in to Ethnic players within the player pathway system, The signposting and awareness of local faith centres at home and away games. The provision for days off to be taken to celebrate Eid, The connection with specialist team Doctor to support with nutritional advice during the period of Ramadan to players and staff.

We have developed ways to share information and knowledge around Ramadan with other members of staff, players, and community groups to help increase the knowledge and awareness of all, We have hosted Eid and Iftars during Ramadan, We have worked with the local Muslim Society to help us with providing an imam for the club during major matches that link with Ramadan and Friday pray days. We have also offered support to a member of staff who

is attending the Islamic University in Leicester. If we have identified players from oppositions traveling to Chelmsford, we arrange for a member of the support staff at the club to make sure all is in place to support the player whilst at the ground.

These are several areas that we have looked to gather insight and support on for all involved in the game, the next stage of the education is around the move of Ramadan into the Spring / Winter months and the preparation needed to support players, staff and the recreational game during these months which created different understandings to the summer months.

The process is an ongoing system of listening and

## The focus is God– consciousness. It's about togetherness, patience, charity, empathy, and self-reflection.

adapting environments to create the experience that is exciting, engaging and enhancing for all, leading to the outcome of the ability for every person to Fly Like an Eagle.

**Dan Feist**  
Deputy Chief Executive Office  
Essex Cricket



# Creating Regal Ramadan Moments Together

During the holy month of Ramadan, the team at Regal Foods come together as one – and stronger than ever, with colleagues observing the holy month and with non-practicing Muslims supporting those taking part, it marks a special time for everyone.

Colleagues from across our teams join those who are observing by taking part in a sponsored Ramadan fast, this does not only raise money for chosen charities and offer support to others, but raises an understanding of what Ramadan means and what it brings to each and every one of us.

Each Iftar teams from our bakery and manufacturing sites come together to break fast, this includes complimentary fresh fruits, hot drinks and hot food. During this time there is a real sense of togetherness

demonstrating a strong bond the holy month creates.

All our facilities across our sites have a dedicated prayer room giving those who are practising the time and space to come together through prayer.

Community is important to us as a business that started in the heart of a local community. Last year during Ramadan we created a new multi-faith prayer space at Valley Parade – the home of Bradford City AFC, as well as hosting the clubs first ever Iftar, an event that was open to everyone in the Bradford community from all faiths and all walks of life.

At Regal, we create Ramadan moments together.





To see a world where muslim  
athletes flourish & fulfil their potentials



**NUJUM**

