



ISB ATLANTA



Coaching for School Coaches:

Religious Accommodations for Muslim Student-Athletes

From NBA great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to Ibtihaj Muhammad, Olympic medalist in fencing and first American woman to wear a hijab while competing in the Olympic Games, Muslims are renowned athletes in every sport across the globe. No doubt there are Muslim student-athletes in your school and on your teams. Here are a few things to know about ensuring a safe, inclusive and welcoming team environment.

Who's on your team?

Muslim-Americans are the most ethnically diverse religious group in our country. That means that Muslim student-athletes will come from many different backgrounds and may have different traditions. Be careful not to make assumptions about their religious practice. If there is a question... ask!

Being Part of the Team:

Ramadan[For more information on fasting during the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan in Schools, download our Ramadan in Schools Guidelines.] There is no religious directive saying that Muslims cannot be physically active during Ramadan. Once they've established the Ramadan routine, which includes changes in sleep, calorie intake and limited hydration, in the first week, many student-athletes will be able to adjust to keep training and playing.

Some considerations that coaches for any type of sporting team/club to take into account:

- During the day athletes will not be able to eat or drink, even water.
- Students will be getting up early in the morning for a pre-dawn breakfast. Be mindful that Muslim athletes may have a burst of energy in early morning practices or events.
- Athletes who are fasting may need breaks. If there is more than one Muslim athlete competing, especially in a team sport, consider staggering them in breaks.
- If a game goes past sunset when it is time to break the fast, allow them the time out to do so, typically with dates and water. They will also need approximately five minutes for prayer.
- Check in with Muslim team members about how the fast is going, and how they feel. Do not assume that fasting will make them weak or unable to play.
- During Ramadan, a student-athlete may rush out at the end of a game/event to get home for the family's evening meal and community prayer time.
- Muslim athletes will be running a tight timeline of school, practice/play and Ramadan prayers and meals. They may look tired; sleep will be lacking. However, unless they say so, they can continue to participate.
- Keep the team informed. Make other players and coaches aware so they are mindful when competing together. A strong team is a team that knows each other well.

