

TOOLKIT FOR COACHES

WORKING WITH MUSLIM FEMALE ATHLETES

Ryerson
University



GXS
LAB



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TOOLKIT TUESDAY #1



CLOTHING AND HIJAB



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TO BE IN 'HIJAB'

It's an Islamic requirement for Muslim women to be 'in hijab': **this means covering the hair on the head and the surface and shape of the body.** Hijab is compulsory for Muslim women when in the presence of men (who are not immediate family members) or in public. Hijab is also the word for the garment used to cover the hair on the head.





THE INDIVIDUAL

Always remember that individuals are on different stages religiously and may have their **own personal level of adherence to religious requirements**. If one Muslim girl chooses to play sports wearing a hijab and full-coverage athletic attire, it does not mean that all Muslims girls will choose to do the same.

Therefore, coaches and teammates should support the athlete in the decision she has made for herself. **An accepting, supportive and non-judgemental environment** should be created where Muslim athletes can be encouraged to play sports confidently while meeting the religious requirements they wish.

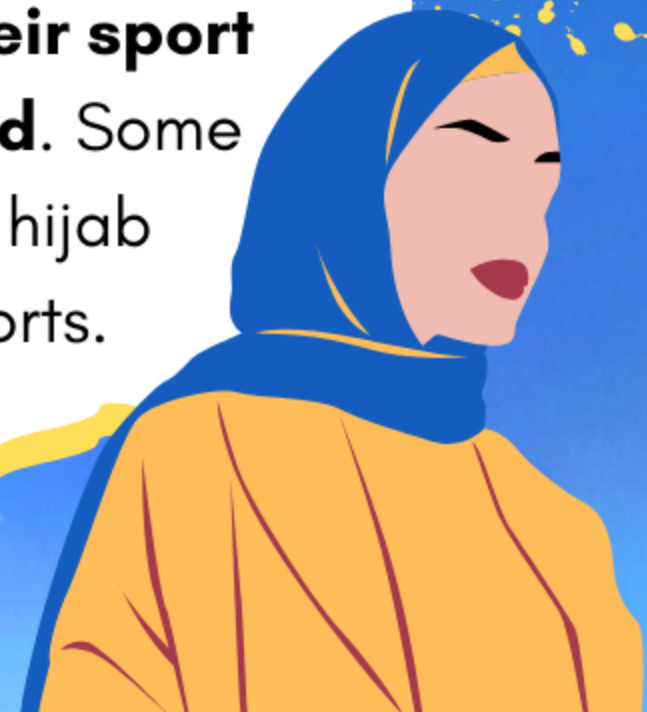
Remember: The athlete herself is the best person to tell you what she personally needs!





DIFFERENT TYPES OF HIJAB

Hijabs are typically secured with pins which can pose a safety hazard when playing sports (especially contact sports). There are other options! **Muslim athletes may either wear a no-pin one-piece sports hijab, or a beanie, or by tying their hijab in a way that does not interfere with their sport and removes the safety hazard.** Some girls may choose not to wear hijab exclusively while playing sports.



BE APPROACHABLE

Make sure your athlete is aware of league uniforms or sport-specific attire

and be aware of any barriers to their participation. Ask, "Is there anything I can do to help you find the clothing you need to play?" and provide accommodations.



DO'S

DO: Remember that every Muslim has their own level of adherence to religious requirements and that the athlete herself is the best person to tell you what she personally needs.

DO: Ensure that team members are also aware of the athlete's religious and cultural requirements and are also supportive

DO: Recommend athletes to wear cotton and whites (especially when playing outdoors in the summer months) to stay cool.

DO: Make sure the athlete is staying properly hydrated!



DONT'S

DON'T: Do not make clothing a barrier to participation.

DON'T: Do not ask "Are you hot in that?" or "I don't know how you can wear that." These are micro-aggressive comments.





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TOOLKIT TUESDAY #2



FOOD AND DRINK





Alcohol Consumption

Many Muslim athletes experience social exclusion or feel alienated within sports environments when there is heavy involvement of alcohol in team-building and social activities. **Drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam and many athletes may choose to completely remove themselves from environments where alcohol is present (ie. bars or keggers).**

Alcohol consumption is very common in sports environments whether during rookie initiations, celebrations after a game, or team socials. Having team socials where alcohol is present or is the main focus of the gathering, can discourage Muslim athletes from feeling included in celebrations, festivities and ultimately, as part of the team.



HALAL FOOD

The absence of halal food can be another barrier to inclusion for Muslim athletes in social environments. **Halal (meaning lawful), is an Islamic dietary standard for what Muslims are permitted to eat and typically refers to meat.** Halal meat is prepared with a specific religious procedure (and pork is entirely forbidden).



Not having halal options at team BBQs, dinners and food-related socials may **deter athletes from attending and enjoying** the event just as much as their teammates or even eating anything at all if there is no halal food available.



Dear Coaches,

When planning events, make your team aware if there are team members with religious dietary restrictions. **Encourage team socials where everyone can feel included and where the team collectively understands the needs and experiences of their teammates.** Have the team come up with an alcohol-free team building activity and plan it together. Don't have the Muslim athlete do this labour alone. If there are team events where alcohol will be present, make it clear that there is no pressure for athletes to drink if they don't want to or attend the event at all.



At dinners, BBQs, potlucks and other food-related events, make sure there are halal options and communicate this with the athlete so she knows that you are supportive of their religious practices. **Halal meat is readily available at many grocery stores in the city.** You can even ask the athlete to purchase the meat/food from a source they trust is halal and reimburse them.



DO'S

LOOK FOR THIS
SYMBOL ON HALAL
FOOD PACKAGING

DO: Accommodate the athlete's dietary restrictions by organizing food & alcohol-free social activities (eg. Escape room) or for events with food, encourage a potluck or choose a restaurant with halal options.



DO: If you are organizing a potluck or BBQ, ensure that separate tongs or utensils are used in the preparation and/or serving. Avoid cross-contamination of halal and non-halal foods!

DO: Ensure that team members are also aware of the athlete's dietary restrictions and are respectful.



DO: Remember that every Muslim has their own level of adherence to religious requirements and that the athlete herself is the best person to tell you what she personally needs.



DON'T'S

DON'T: Do not make food or drink a barrier to inclusion in social environments.

DON'T: Do not pressure the athlete to eat non-halal food or drink alcohol by saying things like "Not even one drink?" This behaviour is exclusionary and should be avoided.

DON'T: Do not make the athlete feel alienated for their choices.





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TOOLKIT TUESDAY #3



RAMADAN



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WHAT IS RAMADAN?

Ramadan is an Islamic month during which Muslims fast and completely abstain from food and drink between sunrise to sunset. Islamic months follow the lunar calendar, which means that in the Gregorian calendar, Ramadan occurs 10 days earlier every year.

Ramadan is a holy month full of prayer and spiritual reflection for Muslims. **Abstinence from food and drink teaches Muslims to be grateful for what they have and allows them to focus on the remembrance of God.**



RAMADAN IN THE SUMMER



When Ramadan happens in the summer months, Muslims may be fasting for as long as 16–17 hours each day. **It can be particularly challenging for athletes to play sports while fasting, especially outdoors in the heat and with layers of clothing on.** Most games are held during the day, which means observing Muslim athletes are playing intense, physically exhausting, competitive games while fasting and without having water to remain hydrated.



DEAR COACHES,

It is not impossible for a Muslim athlete to both fast and play sports. It may be challenging and will take time to get used to but it can be done! **Instead of drinking water, an athlete can stay hydrated by pouring cold water over their face and body.** More frequent breaks may also be needed. Some Muslim athletes may choose not to fast on the days they have practices or games, and some fasting athletes may choose to forego some games or practices if they are feeling low on energy. Be accommodating to both. **Women and girls are exempted from fasting on the days they are menstruating.**

Coaches should be concerned for their athletes' physical wellbeing but should also be respectful and supportive. It is best to ask the team before the start of Ramadan **"Is there anybody on this team who will be fasting?"** and **then prepare to make accommodations.** Being culturally sensitive is an important part of being a good coach and mentor!



DO'S



DO: Schedule more breaks during the practice or game.

DO: Make sure the athlete is staying cool by regularly pouring water over their face and body.

DO: Schedule training and practices after sunset or before sunrise where possible.

DO: Remember that women and girls are exempted from fasting on the days they are menstruating (so don't be surprised if you notice that she's not fasting!).



DO: Remember that every Muslim has their own level of adherence to religious requirements and that the athlete herself is the best person to tell you what she personally needs.





DON'T'S

DON'T: Do not discourage the fasting athlete from playing sports. Understand that they are meeting a serious religious requirement.

DON'T: Do not ask "Not even water?" or "I could never do that!" These are micro-aggressive comments.

DON'T: Do not feel bad if other athletes are eating or drinking in front of a fasting athlete - most fasting Muslims don't mind.





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TOOLKIT TUESDAY #4



PRAYER



DAILY PRAYER

Daily prayer is obligatory in Islam and Muslims are **required to perform five prayers every day**. Each of these prayers is set at different times during the day: at dawn just before sunrise; at midday; during the late part of the afternoon; just after sunset; and at night. Prayer **timings follow the position of the sun** during the day meaning that the exact timings will change throughout the year.



PRAYING IN PUBLIC

Sometimes, Muslims encounter curious, concerned, or sometimes bigoted reactions from others when praying in public. Since each prayer must be made before it's allocated time ends, often Muslims will have to pray outside of the home, such as the field, gym or a parking lot, in order to not miss prayer. Below is a visual of what some prayer positions look like.



DEAR COACHES,

Sports practice and games are frequently scheduled during prayer times and Muslim athletes should have access to prayer space. Prayer space can be as simple as a **1x2m clear area** in the corner of a gym or in a field, reasonably separate from distractions. Athletes also need **access to water to make wudu** (a quick ritual washing) before prayer. Prayers take about **5-10 minutes to complete**.

Although religious rights are protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code, **asking for religious accommodation takes courage** and making the request can sometimes feel like an alienating experience. As a coach, **make it clear to the athlete that time and space to pray are available** if they need it. If an athlete's parents are concerned about their child missing prayer due to participating in sports, reassure them that **breaks for prayer times will be accommodated**.



DO'S

DO: Ask in advance if the athlete needs accommodation and make prayer space and time available.

DO: Make sure prayer space and access to water are available for Muslim athletes.

DO: Remember that women and girls are exempted from praying on the days they are menstruating (don't be surprised if she doesn't need a prayer break on some days!).

DO: Schedule breaks to align with prayer times.

DO: Remember that every Muslim has their own personal level of adherence to religious requirements and that the athlete themselves is the best person to tell you what they personally need.



DON'T'S

DON'T: Do not disturb, talk to, or walk in front of the athlete while they are praying. Otherwise, they must restart the prayer.

DON'T: Do not stare at the athlete while they are in prayer. It's impolite!



DON'T: Do not discourage the athlete from praying. Understand that they are meeting a serious religious requirement.





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TOOLKIT TUESDAY #5



PHYSICAL CONTACT





WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In Islam, physical contact between opposite sexes is discouraged. For this reason, some Muslim female athletes may feel uncomfortable being touched, tackled, or sparred by a male teammate or coach. Coaches and male teammates should be mindful of this and the best approach is to first ask for consent.



AN EXAMPLE

For example, “Is it okay if I touch you on the shoulder to demonstrate how this play works?”

This builds trust among athletes, teammates, and coaches and creates an environment where the athlete can assert other religious needs that they may require accommodation for.



DO'S

DO: Hire female coaches or instructors.

DO: Ask for consent from the female athlete before making physical contact.

DO: Remember that every Muslim has their own personal level of adherence to religious requirements and that the athlete themselves is the best person to tell you what they personally need.



DONT'S

DON'T: Do not make physical contact with a Muslim female athlete without asking for permission first



CREDITS

Information in the above Toolkit shared during the 2020 Hijabi Ballers Virtual Community Conference is compiled primarily using the information, research and takeaways gathered from the 2018 Hijabi Ballers Community Conference and its following presenters: Asma Khalil, Lauren Wolman, Sadaf Jamal, Deena Henaway, Faatimah Zahra Hatia and Ameera Seiyad. Information and informal research gathered from Hijabi Ballers' day-to-day programs are also reflected in the toolkit. This toolkit content is written by Amreen Kadwa and edited by Habibah Haque. Graphics are made by Ruqayah Rahaman and Gabriela Greco of Ryerson's University's GXS Lab at FCAD. Thank you to all of our generous contributors.