RAMADAN & FOOTBALL FACTSHEET
EVERY YEAR MILLIONS OF MUSLIMS AROUND THE WORLD FAST DURING THE HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN. THIS FACTSHEET WILL HELP EXPLAIN WHAT THIS MEANS IN THE FOOTBALL WORLD.

WHAT IS RAMADAN?
Ramadan is a month in the Islamic calendar when adult Muslims are required to fast. It is known as one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Ramadan lasts one lunar month, around 29 or 30 days, which means it comes around 11 days earlier each year and so starts on a different date each year.

WHAT FOOTBALL RULES APPLY TO RAMADAN?
The FA rules make it clear that all faiths are observed and respected:

FA RULE B5 FOOTBALL & RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE
a. A Participant cannot be compelled to play football on bona fide occasions where religious observance precludes such activity, save where the Participant: (i) has consented to do so on such occasions; or (ii) is registered as a player under written contract, which shall be taken as consent to play on such occasions unless otherwise provided for in the contract.

b. Annually, when planning programmes, Competitions shall define and notify agreed dates of such occasions.

THIS YEAR
Ramadan is predicted to start on 18 June and conclude on 17 July 2014 (depending on the sighting of the moon). Adult Muslims give up food and drink during daylight hours. Those who are sick, physically unable, travelling, pregnant or very young are excused.

During Ramadan Muslims will wake before dawn for a meal called ‘Suhur’. When daylight is over, most Muslims will traditionally break the fast with dates or water, followed by a meal, this is called ‘iftar’, which means ‘the breaking of the fast’ and is traditionally an occasion for family and friends to get together.

RAMADAN AND YOUTH FOOTBALL
There is no set age when Muslims start fasting, it is generally post-puberty but can vary from between 8 and 16 years old. This will effect Muslim participation in youth football during Ramadan, especially in the older age groups. As this is the case best practice for leagues would be to ask any predominantly Muslim teams about their plans to fast and play.

“There has been a big improvement in football’s understanding of Islam. But then I believe today football has a better understanding of religion as a whole. Judaism and Christianity too – all the religions.”
Abou Diaby
Arsenal FC
FASTING
Fasting combined with extra prayers and a lack of sleep can leave people feeling a little more tired and dehydrated than normal. Many Muslims will find it harder to play football and may not want to take part.

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 (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 enhancing your understanding.

PARDING
Muslims may practice their faith more during Ramadan and may wish to offer prayers during the day. This will normally be two to three times a day for a few minutes a time for which they will require a small private area. Muslims may also attend extra prayers, known as ‘Tarawih’, during the night.

ACKNOWLEDGING THOSE OBSERVING RAMADAN
As with any religion, showing your Muslim friends that you know it is Ramadan is likely to be appreciated. Posting an acknowledgement on your website or twitter or simply a notice in your clubhouse is a good idea.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RAMADAN ENDS?
The end of Ramadan is marked by the festival of Eid for which Muslims may take time off. The day Eid falls on will depend on the sighting of the moon therefore flexibility is necessary. The appropriate way to express best wishes to a Muslim at Eid is to say “Eid Mubarak”.

GUIDANCE AROUND FIXTURES
It is always important to take note of any important religious dates when planning fixtures. Ideally, if a team has a significant number of Muslim players it is best practice to try and avoid arranging fixtures during Ramadan.

Annually The FA produces a calendar of religious dates in order to support the game, this guidance has been written to provide you with the most significant dates for religious observance together with some information on them. Click here to see the current calendar here.

“Faith and football are two essential parts of who I am. The flexibility that I’ve been shown in this regard has been vital in my journey in football. Taking note of Ramadan and all other faith events will help make football a game for everyone”

Rimla Akhtar MBE
FA Council Member and Chair of the Muslim Women’s Sports Foundation

“We work with over 100 young Muslims every week, both boys and girls, and during Ramadan we talk to both the players and their parents to make sure football can work hand in hand with their faith. Fasting can be challenging for adults but is often different for children so we work with both families and the community as a whole to cater what we deliver to their needs, these decisions are always best made together”

Zuber Patel
FA Skills Coach, Blackburn