

Ramadan breaks to be used across English football again

As Ramadan begins this week, football matches across the UK will once again include a "Fast-Breaking Pause." Since Muslim players cannot eat or drink from sunrise to sunset, matches scheduled for late afternoon or evening (like the 5:30 PM Saturday kick-off) often overlap with the exact moment they are allowed to eat.

How it Works:

- **The Plan:** Before the game, captains and referees agree on a time.
- **The Break:** Play doesn't stop mid-action. Instead, the referee waits for a natural pause—like a goal-kick or a throw-in—to blow the whistle.
- Players like Mohamed Salah (Liverpool) or Amad Diallo (Man Utd) sprint to the sidelines for a quick drink of water or an energy gel.
- **The Rule:** This is not a tactical time-out. Coaches aren't allowed to give instructions; it is purely for the players to get the nutrients they need to finish the match.

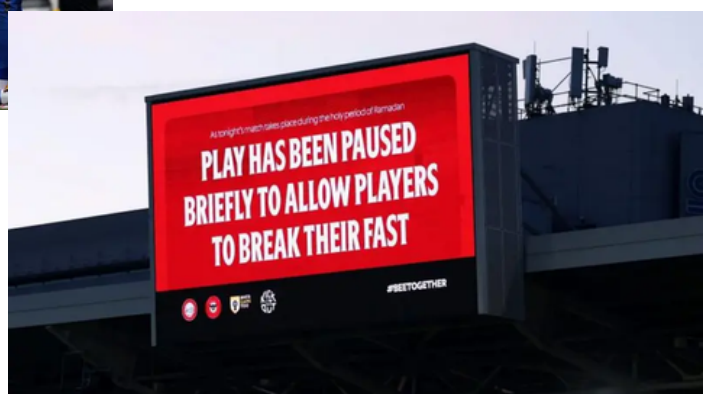
Why Do They Do It?

One of the Five Pillars of Islam is fasting (Sawm). It is a way for Muslims to show devotion to their faith and practice self-discipline.

"In the Premier League, you are free to do whatever suits your faith. They never do anything against your religion, and this is great." — Abdoulaye Doucoure, former Everton midfielder.

The Athlete's Challenge:

Imagine playing a high-intensity sport for 70 minutes without a single drop of water. Many clubs now change their training times to the morning or late night to help their Muslim players stay at peak performance.



Questions

Comprehension

1. **True or False:** Premier League games stop exactly at sunset, even if the ball is in the middle of a goal-scoring chance.
2. **The Captain's Role:** What must a team captain do before the game starts if they have players who are fasting?
3. **The Goal:** Why is this break strictly not allowed to be used as a "tactical time-out"?

Comparison – France vs. The UK

In February 2026, a viral moment happened in the French league (Ligue 1) during a match between Nantes and Le Havre.

- Unlike the UK, the French Football Federation (FFF) bans official breaks for Ramadan, citing strict "neutrality" rules.
- Nantes goalkeeper Anthony Lopes (who is not Muslim) suddenly fell to the ground in the 74th minute, clutching his leg as if injured. Because goalkeepers are the only players who can be treated on the pitch without leaving, the whole game stopped.
- While the physio "treated" him, five of his Muslim teammates ran to the sidelines to quickly eat dates and drink water. Lopes got up slowly, perfectly "healed," as soon as they were finished.

The Debate Task:

- Why did Anthony Lopes have to "fake" an injury rather than just asking the referee to stop?
- Do you think Lopes was right to trick the referee to help his teammates, or should the rules of the French League be followed no matter what?

Research – The "Elite Athlete" Profile

Pick a Muslim athlete (e.g., Mohamed Salah or Lamine Yamal).

- **Find out:** How many goals/achievements have they managed while fasting?
- **The Nutritionist Challenge:** Abdoulaye Doucoure mentions that the club chef prepares "Halal" food. Research what Halal means and why it's important for these athletes during Eid celebrations