

Case Study: Ramadan, Sports Medicine, and Performance

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A.J. Ayad is a 21-year-old college collegiate basketball player for a state university in California. A.J. is the starting forward and the only Muslim student-athlete on his team. It is important to him to adhere to the practices of his Muslim tradition. There have been some dietary challenges on various road trips and contests, but they have typically been able to find alternatives. However, A.J.'s coach has often indicated frustration with his requests for accommodation.

This year, Ramadan coincides with the conference championship tournament. The team will be playing multiple games over the next few days, with little rest. There is a team rule that you must fully practice to play in games. A.J. chooses to fully participate while fasting. While the first game goes without incident, A.J. is relatively lethargic and not performing at his typical level. He is confronted by his coach after the game and given an ultimatum: if he doesn't play harder, he will be benched. A.J. consults the team's dietician and athletic trainer, who suggest a higher caloric intake after sundown and conservation of energy by not fully participating in practice the day before the game. The coach tells A.J. and the medical staff, "You know the rules; sorry."

Reflection:

- What ethical, medical, and performance challenges are present in this situation?
- What information and strategies might equip the dietician, athletic trainer, and coach to collaborate with the student-athlete in this situation?
- What approaches can A.J. adopt to observe fasting during Ramadan while optimizing his contribution as a member of the team?

References:

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