

Does religion have a role to play in sport?

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When Crystal Palace's Marc Guehi scored against Arsenal on Tuesday night, he did what he often does - point to the sky. Arsenal's Jurrien Timber - nicknamed 'Pastor Timber' by fans - followed suit when he scored in the penalty shoot-out at the end of the game. Both teams have influential players who have recently been discussing the importance of their Christian beliefs. And it's not just in football where we've seen contrasting headlines about professional athletes displaying their faith.

Earlier this year, at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, GB sprinter Jeremiah Azu was warned not to wear a "100% Jesus" headband. But can your beliefs impact your performance - and how you are treated - in the sport you play? Sport governing bodies often have rules against displaying religious and political slogans during competition. Jeremiah wasn't formally punished for wearing his "100% Jesus" headband in a 400m semi-final, but World Athletics bosses said they spoke to his team about the accessory. The 24-year-old says he now backs the rules separating religion from the track, but he's glad he did it. He tells BBC Newsbeat he believes his "strength" comes from his faith, and he wore the headband to show that.

His father is a pastor, so Jeremiah says religion has always been a part of his life. "We read the Bible at home, we prayed at home," he recalls. He says his religion helps his performance in athletics. "As a Christian you have to be disciplined," he says, a trait he feels transfers over to track and field. "There's days where it's difficult to push, but I know I have to from the discipline I've got from my faith," he explains.

Semi-pro footballers Zainab El-Mouden and Jaiden Chang-Brown are both devoted to their religions. Though Jeremiah says he's never felt "muted" when talking about his faith, up-and-coming athletes tell Newsbeat it's not always that simple. Semi-pro footballer Zainab El-Mouden, who plays for Chesham United FC Women, says there are challenges as a female Muslim player who wears a hijab. The garment is worn over the head as a display of modesty, but it's not always been welcomed on the football pitch. It was

banned by governing body Fifa until 2014, when players were permitted to wear it for religious reasons. And just two years ago, Moroccan defender Nouhaila Benzina, 27, made history by becoming the first player to wear a hijab at a World Cup. Zainab, 22, says her faith means everything to her, from the way she conducts herself to the way she dresses. She says it's been a real journey to become comfortable wearing a hijab while playing football. "Initially I hated it, I hated the way it looked on me," she says. "My hijab was my biggest insecurity and then it became my biggest strength. "Whether you want to or not, you're going to see me and you're going to watch me more than anyone else." Zainab feels there is still a difference in how male Muslim players are treated compared with female players. "With a female Muslim player, they're visibly different so that's where I think the rift kind of comes in," she says. After growing up with no one that "looked like" her in football to inspire her, Zainab says she wants to be that role model for others. "All the girls that are growing up now need that representation to play," she says.

Does faith impact your performance in sport ?

There are studies on how a positive mindset and confidence can influence your performance. Religion isn't always part of it - many athletes have rituals they "must" follow before a big game or race to centre themselves. Some report that their faith forms part of preparations for a big event. A Seoul University study published in 2000, based on interviews with 180 sports people across 41 sports, identified prayer as one of seven main "coping strategies" those surveyed used to combat anxiety before a big event.

It suggested this could have a positive effect on their performance. Semi-professional footballer Jaiden Chang-Brown, of Lingfield FC, tells Newsbeat his faith has helped him to manage his emotions in a slightly different way. "I feel like sometimes my passion could get the better of me in the past," he says. "Sometimes I would lash out at teammates. "It's really helped just to give me peace when I'm on the pitch."

Jaiden says his faith has helped him to improve his mindset and "tap into that psychological side of football" when he plays. The 21-year-old describes himself as a "born-again Christian" and says his religion is the most important thing in his life. "It's bigger than football, it's bigger than everything," he says. "People think it's not cool to be bold in your faith, but it is. "You can laugh and have your giggles, but it's what I believe in."