

# *Women's football league in London bans Somali Muslim player over clothing*

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London, October 31 (RHC)-- Former Somalia captain Iqra Ismail says a referee told her she must wear shorts to play in the Greater London Women's Football League in the UK.

Football's governing body in England has said that women playing the sport across its competitions are allowed to wear clothing that follows their religious beliefs after former Somalia captain Iqra Ismail was prevented from playing a match for not wearing shorts.

The Football Association (FA) said on Wednesday they were aware of the matter that arose two days earlier. Ismail revealed in an Instagram video that she was not allowed to come on as a substitute for the team United Dragons during a game in the Greater London Women's Football League (GLWFL) on Sunday because she was wearing tracksuit bottoms.

The 24-year-old Muslim player, who is also a coach, added that she has been playing in the GLWFL for five years wearing similar clothing. "Every year, they have made it more and more difficult for women like me to play now they have drawn the line and banned me from playing until I compromise my beliefs," Ismail said in the video.

The London-based player, who is also a refugee advocate, said the referee for the game told her he had been asked "strictly" not to allow such clothing.

"If we don't wear shorts, we cannot play – that's what I was told. So of course I stood by my principles and was not allowed to kick a ball."

Ismail, who is an advocate for Muslim women in sport, said such actions make it difficult for women like her to participate. "At this level the priority should be making football accessible and the Greater London Women's Football League have done the exact opposite," she went on to say in the video message.

She added that the incident moved her to tears, leaving her feeling frustrated and isolated. "They ask me why football lacks diversity and why it's difficult to find women who look like me in the competitive game – things like this are the reason.

"My responsibility is to advocate for women like me so these things can't happen."

Following the incident, the FA said it had communicated with all local football governing bodies on clothing earlier in the year. "We proactively wrote to all county FAs and match officials across the women's grassroots game earlier this year to confirm that women and girls should be allowed to wear clothing that ensures their faith or religious beliefs are not compromised," a spokesperson from the FA said.

The FA said they were aware of the matter and were in contact with the Middlesex FA to ensure it gets resolved quickly. The GLWFL said in a statement it was their understanding that players were required to wear shorts on top of clothing that covered their legs.

"However, we have since been made aware that shorts on top of tracksuits or tights are not required... we will be providing this updated guidance to all our match officials and members," the league wrote on X on Tuesday.

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