

LOUSY ANALOGIES

In a story in the sports section of the August 11 *New York Times*, it discusses how a public high school in Michigan has rearranged its football practice schedule to suit Muslim players during Ramadan; most of the student body is Muslim. Instead of practicing during the day, when Muslims are fasting, the workouts were shifted to late at night. For the second consecutive year, practice is being held between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m.

The reporter, sensing that this was a highly unusual thing for a public institution to do, tried to come up with some analogous situations. After noting that “the accommodation of a sport and religion has any number of interfaith precedents,” he listed three examples.

“Sandy Koufax, who is Jewish, declined to pitch Game 1 of the 1965 World Series because it was scheduled on Yom Kippur. Brigham Young University, owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, does not play athletic events on Sunday. And the Hall of Fame basketball player Hakeem Olajuwon, a Muslim, also fasted during Ramadan.”

All three analogies are lousy. No one in Major League Baseball did anything to accommodate Koufax—he simply decided not to pitch on the Jewish Holy Day. Brigham Young is a private school that calls its own shots, so the issue of religious accommodation is a red herring. And Olajuwon, like Koufax, simply practiced his beliefs, neither seeking nor getting any kind of accommodation from anyone.

In other words, what we have here is one more case where favoritism of Muslims by public institutions is being justified as if it were common practice.