

Man of the match? Here's your rosewater and pomegranate: Premier League offers non-alcoholic alternative to champagne to avoid offending Muslim players

It's a Premier League ritual and a big moment for the man of the match... as he is presented with a large bottle of champagne in the tunnel after the game.

But a series of embarrassing incidents involving Muslim footballers has prompted the league to offer a non-alcoholic alternative from the Middle East.

From now on, any Muslim man of the match will be rewarded with a bottle of waard – a combination of rosewater and pomegranate seen as a more 'culturally appropriate' token of their achievement.



Awkward: Muslim Manchester City star Yaya Toure (right) turns down the champagne awarded to him for being named man of the match because he doesn't drink

Earlier this year, Premier League sponsor Barclays considered scrapping the award altogether after one of Manchester City's star players, Yaya Toure, turned down his prize on live TV, telling a teammate: 'I don't drink because I am a Muslim, so you keep it.'

Last weekend, Newcastle United striker Demba Ba, declined even to pass team-mate Jonas Gutierrez the champagne after Gutierrez was voted man of the match.



A rose syrup like this will be offered to Muslim players instead of champagne from now on

Ba, whose goal celebration is the Sujood, the prostration performed in prayer to Allah, is one of four Muslim players at Newcastle.

The others are Papiss Cisse, Leon Best and Hatem Ben Arfa. Muslim players at Manchester City include Toure and his brother Kolo, Edin Dzeko and Samir Nasri.

At Wigan there is Ali Al-Habsi, and at Chelsea, Salomon Kalou. There are rumours that new Manchester United signing Robin van Persie, who has a Muslim wife, is a convert.

A Premier League spokesman said: 'We have players from all over the world and are watched all over the world.'

'This is a sensible move and we support it.'

The presentation of award is not a new idea – it is given to Formula 1 drivers who make the podium at the Bahrain Grand Prix.