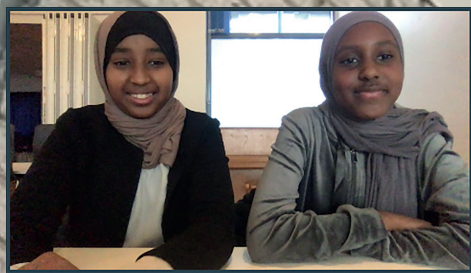


Huda and Yasmin meet Nadia Nadim



There's a very special slightly edgy mood this Friday afternoon in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen. Huda and Yasmin are seated in the district community centre at Lundtoftegade. They're going to talk with their idol, the footballer Nadia Nadim online. The technique is playing up, but suddenly, there's Nadia Nadim on the screen. She waves happily and smiles.

Nadia: Hi there, girls, I'm thrilled to meet you.

Huda: Hi! I'm Huda and this is Yasmin.

Nadia: Wow, great names, nice! The girls giggle: 'Thank you, thanks.'

Huda: I play football all the time with Yasmin in the yard. We play with others and sometimes we also play just the two of us.

Nadia: When you say the yard, where's that, exactly? Is it street or club?

Yasmin: Well, we go to football training and then we also play in the Street Society 'Under Buen' (Under the Arches) and in our yard.

Nadia: Cool, so did I when I was living in Denmark. I went to football training and we also played a lot in front of our block and then we had these pitches with street football and basketball; I was there all the time!

Yasmin: We play for a club called Nørrebro United and I'm a forward and Huda plays full back and also keeper.

Nadia: How long have you been playing?

Yasmin: I've played all my life, but only started to train when I was six.

Nadia: What was the reason you started playing football? What made you think: Now I'm going to play football?

Yasmin: I grew up with three brothers and when our dad took us out to play football, I played with them. I thought it was fun and now I've become really good. I really enjoy it.

Huda: I also grew up with three brothers, but only one of them plays football. I've always watched them play. So, I also thought it might be fun.

Nadia: What are you doing now, I mean right now with COVID? I imagine you're not allowed to train with your club.

Yasmin: We go and play every day Under Buen or in front of our yard with the others who live there.

Nadia: Cool. That's the best way to play football when you're with your friends. You can do what you like, play two against two, three against three, or alone if there's a wall. Sounds really great.

Yasmin: Why did you start playing football?

Nadia: The reason I started is very like your situation because I happened to be at a place where it was easy to play. I lived at an asylum centre and they had some football pitches. I saw some girls and boys playing. I thought it seemed like fun, so I wanted to try. Since then, I've been playing all the time. Many say that they go to football training, but I don't train, I just play. Well, I enjoy football because it makes me happy and the more you play the better you get.

Huda: How does it feel to play football?

Nadia: It's difficult to describe, but, with a football, I feel that I can forget everything that goes on around me. I can stand for hours, alone or with friends, as long as I've got a ball. It's like an escape from everything that happens around you, you can really immerse yourself in the sport. I think the best thing about football is that you can always learn new things, no matter how much you've been training, there are always new things to learn. And the joy, of course, it makes me happy, truly happy, when I play ball. You must feel the same way, Yasmin, you're a forward, you must know 100% that it's the greatest feeling when you score a goal. And you, Huda, saving a ball on

the line as a keeper must be a really wonderful feeling, too. It's all these emotions that make me love it plus the friends you get. You get to know other people, you learn about other cultures, and I think that's pretty interesting.

“ At this moment, you're a sort of mould-breaker or trendsetter, as they say, and you're doing it because you think it's fun. ”

Yasmin: When you were a child and played in your yard with the boys, did you experience that when you, let's say, dribbled past one of them all the boys would roar, 'Oh, you've been dribbled by a girl', or something. Did you get that, too?

Nadia: In the beginning, I remember many comments about being a girl and every time I dribbled a boy, another five boys would be laughing, 'ha ha, look at him'. But then, after a while, they discovered that I was actually a decent footballer and it all petered out. Once you've earned their respect, it lasts for life. Have you experienced that?

Yasmin: When we play in our yard, Huda and I are the only girls playing. There are more girls there, but they don't come out.

Nadia: Don't worry about it, that's just how it is! You're there because you love playing football, so look at it this way: although no other girls are there now, you are contributing to encouraging them to gradually come out and join in. I remember

when I was playing with the boys: to start with, I was the only girl, too, but after about a year, all the other girls had joined in. They came out and wanted to be part of the fun. You know what I'm saying? At this moment, you're a sort of mould-breaker or trend-setter, as they say, and you're doing it because you think it's fun. In time, it's bound to be quite the normal thing. The boys probably say these things because they're impressed by what you can do; as you say yourself, not very many girls play. You two are some of the first out there, but it'll soon be the norm for everyone. I think it's cool that you're doing it. It takes courage, but you both seem rather brave.

“Look at me, I started in Gug Football Club close to the asylum centre and I played in Skørping, which you’ve probably never heard about! If you want to become a professional, you have to prove it and have it in you.”

Huda: Do you think Muslims can become footballers?

Nadia: Of course, they can! I'm a faithful Muslim myself, and I pray at least two or three times a day. I love my morning prayers – love the moment I'm allowed to pray. Religion has nothing to do with sport and it should not stand in the way of sport. I've proved that it's possible and so have you. I know that you wear headscarves, but that shouldn't be a problem, neither for you nor the people giving you funny looks. It's your decision. If wearing a headscarf makes you hap-

py, then that's it. It's not an obstacle. It's your choice. It's not a problem for me – Muslim girls can do what they want.

Yasmin: Was it tough to become a footballer?

Nadia: It wasn't exactly easy, but honestly, I play football because I think it's fun. So, I just had fun for the most part. Of course, there are times when it's hard to be alone and away from your family. But then again, it's just part of the game and because I love football so much, I know it's a sacrifice I've got to make. But no, of course it isn't easy. You've got to be willing to work hard and believe in your own talent, because there are lots out there who

want to make a living as a professional footballer. It will only happen if you work for it. You can achieve anything, you want, but nothing comes for free, you must really, I mean really, want to do it and be prepared to sacrifice everything.

Nadia: Are you two considering a professional career? Is that a path you're considering?

Huda: I'd like to be a footballer, but I'm not sure that it will happen.

Nadia: Why not, what exactly is it that makes you unsure?

Yasmin: Perhaps it will be too

hard. Don't you have to join a big club? Have a private trainer?

Nadia: Honestly, no. Those things come later. If you're good and the talent is there, you'll be discovered regardless of where you play. The size of the club is not so important. If you're good, you'll be noticed. It's hard work to get that good, it takes a lot of commitment, lots of training and getting noticed on the pitch, scoring goals, and so forth. It can be tough, of course, because of the competition and because so many want to do this. I reckon many people think you've got to play in one of the major clubs in Denmark to be discovered, but that's not true. Look at me, I started in Gug Football Club close to the asylum centre and I played in Skørping, which you've probably never heard about! If you want to become a professional, you have to prove it and have it in you.

Yasmin: Which were you more interested in, school or football?

Nadia: Both, actually. I've always loved school. Ha ha – Huda, you gave me a funny look just now! It's cool to learn new things. Just like football. I feel that every time you learn something new, you become a better person. So, if you're a person who knows a lot, you have an open mind and then it's easier to understand other people and communicate with them. Plus the thing about putting all your eggs in the same basket when it comes to sport. It's a short career. It'll stop in your mid-thirties. I'm stimulated physically when I play football, but I also need to use my head. Both things are important. If, one day, I get injured, I've got something to fall back

on. Being a doctor, I can help lots of people and help those who need help and contribute to society. I do that differently as a doctor than when I play football.

“Religion has nothing to do with sport and it should not stand in the way of sport. I’ve proved that it’s possible and so have you.”

Yasmin: What's your advice if we want to be footballers?

Nadia: Well! What I can say to you girls is this: if you want to become footballers, you've first and foremost got to love football, of course. When you love something and are passionate about it, you want to do it all the time. Meaning that you always want to play and so you play all the time, which will make you good. Remember to have fun. Then you've got to believe in your own skills, well, let me tell you, when I was a child, I was perhaps a bit different to the others, my skin was a bit darker – it was then, now I'm pale because I haven't seen the sun for a hundred years – ha ha ha. I was always told that what I did was wrong. But something inside me told me: 'Actually, I think this is ok', so I believed in my skills and in myself. So: remember always to have fun, believe in yourselves, and work hard. Things don't happen by themselves.

Huda: Was it your own decision that you wanted to play football?

Nadia: Yes, it was. I fell in love with the sport immediately. You know, like ... argh ... love! I've got to do this!

Yasmin: Did your parents support you?

Nadia: My mum always said that as long as I didn't neglect school, I was free to play football. So, I made sure I did. I presented her with top grades – she said, 'fair enough' – she was neither for it or against it, more neutral, like. My mum hasn't watched very many of my games; even when I'm playing for the national team, she hardly even watches that, she doesn't like football! Ha ha. The important thing for me was that she wasn't against it; she wasn't and I'm grateful to her for that.

Huda: When COVID is over, perhaps you'd like to come and play football with us, if you've got the time?

Nadia: I'd really like that. Let's hope that we'll meet one day, so we can do a one-against-one or a two-against-two. I'd really like that. That would be great!

Huda and Yasmin take a screenshot with Nadia.

Nadia: It was fun meeting you – take care, girls.

They wave goodbye and end the call.

Huda: Oh, wow! That was awesome. I was really nervous to begin with. But it's fine now. She was mega nice. I feel I know her now.

Yasmin: Wow, she is just so lucky. I like her Danish language – she speaks Danish differently. I've never heard anybody speak Danish like that before. And you won't have to join a big club, after all.



Yasmin Mohamed Ibrahim Hassan and Huda Abdi Guddi