

Gold Medal Rower Mohamed Sbihi Makes History As The First Muslim Olympic Flag-Bearer For Great Britain

Tory Darting, AMT Reporter

Sbihi hopes this achievement inspires young Muslims to get involved in sports.



Mohamed Sbihi, from Southwest London, will be the first Muslim to carry Great Britain's flag during the opening ceremony at the Tokyo Olympics. Sbihi was a men's four gold medalist in the 2016 Rio Olympics.



Sbihi (left) and his teammates with their gold medals at 2016 Rio Olympics

Sbihi said being chosen was a “surreal experience.”

“It is such an honour. It is an iconic moment within the Olympic movement – people remember those images,” [he said](#). “It is going to be a surreal experience actually going to an Opening Ceremony but this year with the racing schedule it is actually manageable even if I wasn’t a flagbearer. It will be really special and will complete my Olympic puzzle.”



Hannah Mills

Joining Sbihi is Hannah Mills, an Olympic sailor who will be returning to Tokyo to defend her women’s 470 title. Mills said her new role in the Olympics is the “greatest honor” of her career.

“To be asked to carry the flag for Team GB at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games is not a sentence I ever thought I’d say. When I was told it was completely overwhelming and when I had a moment to think about what it meant I got pretty emotional,” [she said](#). “It is the greatest honour in my career and I hope more than ever before that this Games can lift our country and deliver some incredible sporting moments to inspire the nation.”

In 2019, Mills launched the Big Plastic Pledge, which led to her becoming a European Climate Pact Ambassador last year.

Son of a Moroccan father and British mother, Sbihi was recognized as a “potentially successful oarsman” at the age of 15. This led him to joining the GB Rowing World Class Start program and finishing first in the 2003 Great Britain Indoor Rowing Championship.

Prior to his Olympic career, Sbihi studied Sport Science at St. Mary’s University College Twickenham London on a sports scholarship. Though he had an ambition for rowing, he believed that he couldn’t become a rower because it wasn’t an inclusive sport. During the 2012 London Olympics, he spoke publicly about his worries that Ramadan would negatively impact his contributions to the team.

“I was just an average kid that was lucky enough to fall into rowing and here I am, 18 years later, leading out Team GB at the Olympics,” [he said](#). “I hope it has the impact I would like. This is an incredibly diverse and inclusive team, and that’s not been an overnight thing.”

He hopes his accomplishment will inspire young Muslims to get involved in sports, even if success seems impossible.

“To know I’m the first person of Muslim faith to have this role and duty is a very proud moment,” [Sbihi said](#). “We need more representation and hopefully this starts that process of getting young Muslim kids involved in all types of sport.”

