

# Fahamedul Islam interview

**MADE BY FEDERICO SANSEVERINO (SOTTOPORTA - IL CALCIO INTERNAZIONALE, AN ITALIAN PAGE ABOUT INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL. @SOTTOPORTA\_ICI ON INSTAGRAM)**

Born in Feni on June 30, 2006 and moved to Liguria with his family at the age of nine, today Fahamedul Islam, an attacking winger for Olbia Calcio, is one of the brightest prospects in Bangladeshi football, having made his debut for the national team during the break last June. His call-up was greeted with great enthusiasm by the Bangladeshi fans, who, eager to see a young footballer with a European and Italian background at work, had even organized a protest rally last March to oppose his exclusion from the match against India. Here on Sottoporta we had the pleasure of interviewing him, also thanks to the collaboration of the Olbia Calcio press office. Click here to read the interview in Italiano.

**Tell us about your childhood and your first experiences with football.**

*I started playing football late compared to many children in Italy. Children in Italy are used to start playing football early, at four or five years old, while I moved here to Italy when I was nine and in Bangladesh football was the second sport, because the most important thing was cricket. In Bangladesh when you grow up you start with cricket, on the street you see more children playing cricket than football. Cricket was more considered and it still is. Here you could play football only in the streets when it was raining. Once I came here I started going to school, I met some friends of mine who are still my friends, they went to play in an oratory near my house, I started going with them and then I started playing football. Then, while improving more and more, I went to an amateur team in La Spezia, I did a good year there, then I did a few trials, I did a trial with Carrarese Calcio, then I did trials with AC Spezia and AC Spezia took me, so I did two years at AC Spezia in the Under-13 team and Under-14 team and then from there I went to UC Sampdoria. Now I'm here.*

**In Bangladesh, had you already played football or had you started with cricket or other sports?**

*I played football there, but as I told you, in Bangladesh people are crazy about football but there aren't many opportunities to play: you can play soccer when it rains, because there's a season when it rains more and you see all the people barefoot playing football in the streets or on the fields. You were playing there and you had the vibes of playing football, but it's not a sport you play every day like they do here in Italy, where there are kids who play football every day. In Bangladesh there is a specific time to play football.*

**In Bangladesh, from what you have seen, how much do people follow European football and Serie A?**

*I'll tell you the truth: it's a sensational thing. There are four or five hours of time difference and if in Italy we have the UEFA Champions League at 9 pm then in Bangladesh it's 2 am or 3 am, and people are crazy, they stay up all night to watch the games. When there is the FIFA World Cup and in our time slot it's late, people don't sleep to watch the games, they are obsessed with football. There are people who don't miss a game, there are people who watch more games than us who are in Italy. This obsession is sensational, indescribable: they are crazy*

*about football. There isn't much opportunity for them to play, and that's why people follow football so much.*

**Returning to Italy, what did your experiences in the youth sectors of AC Spezia and UC Sampdoria leave you?**

*I grew up a lot, I met many important people and I was trained by many nice and important people. I grew up a lot because when I joined AC Spezia I was a child, but there I took my first steps by growing up, playing national tournaments and the national championship and playing against important teams: I learned a lot of things. Even once I arrived at UC Sampdoria I was still a child, then by slowly growing up I learned a lot of things. Those experiences left a lot of marks on me. When I was fourteen years old I moved to UC Sampdoria and went to live in a boarding school, so by living alone I met a lot of people, new cultures, new guys with whom we lived the same life every day. There I've grown a lot: once I left home and went to live on my own at fourteen I already became mature, it's an important choice. Not everyone can make it. I grew a lot in this aspect too.*

**How are you feeling in Olbia Calcio today?**

*I feel good in Olbia: I arrived in February and there is a very nice situation, a nice project. It's nice, we all know what the city is like. Now I will talk to the directors, who are pursuing a project that I'm interested to.*

**In March you received your first call from the Bangladesh national team. How did you hear the news?**

*The news reached me by speaking directly with the president of the federation. They had already told me this in October-November, when they had contacted me for the first time, then they showed more and more interest and once I arrived in Olbia I immediately knew that the first call had arrived.*

**How did your first contacts with your teammates and the staff go?**

*Very good, and it wasn't easy. I'm the youngest in the team and I got along well with everyone, I have a good relationship with everyone. They're all nice and I'm very nice too, so I settled in very well.*

**In Bangladesh, from what we have seen, people love you: on various social networks pages dedicated to you have been created, as you may have seen. How do you experience this attention from everyone?**

*I try to live it as calmly as possible, not focusing too much on that side. I know that people in Bangladesh have done a lot for me: they put me on top of the world without even seeing me play live and this thing surprised me a lot, it made me understand how much people care about football and how much affection there is down here. This is definitely a positive thing: before maybe no one knew me and now maybe the whole country knows me. It is definitely a positive thing, but for me it must be just the beginning. I try to take it like this: it is just the beginning, because I am eighteen years old and, God willing, I can do something much bigger and reach even higher.*

**In June you made your debut against Bhutan (friendly match won 2-0, ed.) and also played a second match against Singapore (AFC Asian Cup qualifying match lost 1-2, ed.). Tell us about these two matches, how you experienced them and the emotions you felt.**

*It was definitely a sensational emotion, something new for me. I really enjoyed it. At the beginning, I didn't expect to make my debut as a starter, but then if the coach made me a starter it's because I trained really well and because I had the ability to play. It went well: I'm really happy to have made my debut wearing the jersey of my country, it's a source of pride. The result we expected in the second match didn't come, because we wanted to win and it could have been very important. We fought until the end but the result we wanted didn't come. However, this is only the beginning: there are still many matches left in the group, so we just have to work. I enjoyed it really well; maybe I couldn't give everything I could give but I have to say that I tried until the end. For me it was a sensational emotion.*

**How did you find the level of the Bangladesh national team and Asian football in general, both in terms of teammates and opponents and training methods?**

*Given that I grew up in the Italian youth sectors and I played against important teams like Juventus, Inter, Roma and others, I perhaps perceive that technically there is a bit of a difference. The intensity, however, considering that it was the national team, was really high: everyone gave 110% to take a starting place. I had the honor of sharing the field with people like Hamza (Choudhury, who plays for Sheffield United, ed.), a truly important player who played in the Premier League, the most important league in the world according to everyone. He is an important player for me: it was an honor. Then there is also Shamit Shome who plays in Canada, also a truly important player. But I must say that everyone is good and gave 110%. They always commit themselves, they give their all for this team. The level was really high.*

**In the dressing room, did you perceive any cultural and footballing differences between those who grew up in Bangladeshi football and those like you who have a more European heritage?**

*There were actually no differences, because we are all from the same country. Maybe we grew up outside and they grew up in Bangladesh and there will always be a minimum of difference because if you grow up here in another culture you are not 100% tied to the culture of the country, but there is not that much difference in the end. We are all the same and all Bangladeshi.*

**How did you find the training facilities in Bangladesh?**

*They put us in a position to perform very well: the hotel, the bus, the pitch, the stadium... they put us in a position to do well, give 110% and win the match. I have to say that I found a really good situation. There wasn't that much difference between Europe and there, because they put us in a position to perform well.*

**Who are the footballers you feel most inspired by?**

*I always grew up watching Cristiano Ronaldo, I rooted for him and he is my idol. On a footballing level I really like Rodrygo, I'm not telling you that we are similar because it makes me laugh - he is a top player while I am still here - but maybe I am a little similar to him in terms of speed on the wing.*

**What is the best moment of your footballing career so far?**

*The best moment was making my debut for the national team: I saw my parents happy and at the end of the match I went to them, they were excited. For me it was the first time and there were 25,000 people: it was really exciting, really beautiful. Having my parents and my family there was really exciting.*

**What is your career dream?**

*The dream of my career is to get to the top, to get to Serie A like all kids dream. It would be a dream and that's what I train for.*