



### Letter to Editor

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## **Bangladesh: A Massive Fanbase of the Argentina Football Team**

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Dear Editor,

Football is known to be a game that transcends borders and brings people from different backgrounds and cultures together. Millions of people are currently actively following the football game [1]. In Bangladesh, football is one of the most popular sports, and fans of the game are known to be very passionate. However, what is interesting about Bangladesh's football fanbase is the overwhelming support for the Argentina National Football Team. Despite being thousands of miles apart, Bangladeshis have developed a deep-rooted love for Argentina's national football team. The present study will explore why Bangladesh has a massive Argentina fanbase in football.

The history of Bangladesh and Argentina's football connection can be traced back to the 1986 World Cup held in Mexico. Argentina won the tournament, and their talismanic player, Diego Armando Maradona, became a household name in Bangladesh. At that time, Bangladesh was still a young country, having only gained independence from Pakistan in 1971. The land was rapidly changing, with a newfound national identity and pride. Maradona's heroics on the football field and his charismatic ball skills captured the imagination of Bangladeshis, who were looking for a symbol of hope and inspiration. Maradona's iconic "Hand of God" goal in the quarterfinals against England is still remembered by Bangladeshis to this day. The image of Maradona jumping to punch the ball into the net is etched in the minds of football fans across the country. The fact that Maradona scored arguably the greatest goal in World Cup history in the same game only added to his legendary status [2].

Bangladeshis saw Maradona as a symbol of defiance against the established powers, and his success on the football field became a source of inspiration for a young and developing nation. Since then, Argentina's success in International Football has only strengthened its fan base in Bangladesh in addition with rest of the world. Argentina has won three World Cups and been runners-up three times, making them one of the most successful teams in football history. They have produced some of the greatest players who ever played the game, including Maradona, Lionel Messi, and Gabriel Batistuta etc. Bangladeshis have been captivated by the outrageous skill and flair of these players and have become loyal supporters of the Argentine National Football Team [3].

In recent years, Lionel Messi, one of the greatest footballers of all time and the true successor to the legendary Diego Maradona, has played a significant role in the growth of Argentina's fanbase in Bangladesh. Messi's quick decision making capacity, left footed skills with great speed, efficient match reading, magical leadership, and humility have won him millions of fans worldwide, including in Bangladesh. Messi's style of play is admired by Bangladeshis, who see him as a symbol of excellence and dedication to the sport. It should be noted that the people in Bangladesh is divided mostly into two groups in every World Cup Football: Argentina and Brazil. This is why may be Neymar is the country's second most popular footballer in this region nowadays [4].

Moreover, Messi's connection to Bangladesh goes beyond football. Messi met with disadvantaged children during his visit and participated in a football match in 2011. The visit significantly impacted

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Bangladeshis, who saw Messi's willingness to use his platform for good as a testament to his character [5]. Messi's visit's impact was evident in how Bangladeshis welcomed him. The streets of Dhaka were lined with crowds of fans, and Messi was greeted with cheers and applause wherever he went. The visit cemented Messi's status as a hero in Bangladesh and strengthened the bond between the country and Argentina's football team [6].

Altogether, Messi's success on the football field has also contributed to Argentina's fanbase in Bangladesh. Messi has been the heart and soul of Argentina's national team for over a decade, leading the team to the finals of the 2014 World Cup and the Copa America on multiple occasions [7]. But the greatest of them is becoming the World Cup champion in 2022, which was probably his last World Cup. Although they lost the first match against a team Saudi Arabia, they turned the table by winning the rest of the tournament. Messi played a massive role in the tournament, achieving the golden ball and leading the team to the trophy. The long-lived dream of many Bangladeshi fans was completed, and there was a massive rise in the popularity of the already renowned hero [8].

However, Bangladeshi Argentina supporters grabbed the world's attention by supporting their country during the World Cup 2022. This is the first time the world has noticed the craze for Argentinian football in Bangladesh. A video of Bangladeshi supporters jubilantly applauding Messi's goal against Mexico during the World Cup group stage was posted by the official FIFA Twitter account. The tale of Bangladesh and Argentina became a hot issue on the internet when the video became rapidly viral. Additional images and videos of Bangladeshis cheering for Argentina, raising flags, attending rallies, and staying up late to watch the game started to surface online. Argentine media began covering the subject as it started to trend [9].

The information was spread by a number of journalists and Argentine news organizations. Later, the official Twitter account for Argentina's national football team tweeted about Bangladesh with the message, "Thank you for supporting our team". Argentina's mass people joined the media and journalists in expressing their gratitude for Bangladesh on social media. Argentina supporters have been seen at the stadium throughout their World Cup matches carrying Bangladeshi flags and chanting "Bangladesh! Bangladesh!" the notion that people in a country they hardly knew, hundreds of miles away on another continent, shared their passion for Argentina's National Football Team fascinated Argentinians [10].

At present Messi's success has also inspired a generation of young footballers in Bangladesh. Many young players aspire to be like Messi, and his success has given them hope that they, too, can achieve greatness on the football field. Messi's dedication towards sport and his humility have made him a role model for many Bangladeshis, who see him as an embodiment of the values they hold dear.

One of the reasons why Bangladeshis love Argentina's football team so much is the style of play. Argentina is known for its attacking football, [11] with an emphasis on skill and creativity. Bangladeshis appreciate this style of play, which is similar to how they wish to play football. The country's football culture is based on technical ability and individual skill, with players encouraged expressing themselves on the pitch. Argentina's football team embodies this philosophy, and their players are seen as role models for aspiring footballers in Bangladesh.

Bangladeshis support Argentina because of the passion and intensity of their fans. Argentina's supporters are known for their emotional support of the team, with their chants and songs creating a unique atmosphere in stadiums worldwide. Bangladeshis admire this passion and have developed a similar dedication to the team. They wear the blue and white stripes of Argentina's National Football Team with pride and are known to gather in large numbers to watch their matches.

The media have also fueled the popularity of Argentine football in Bangladesh. Argentine football has received extensive coverage in Bangladeshi media, with newspapers, TV channels, and websites dedicating significant resources to covering the team's matches and news. This coverage has helped to build a sense of familiarity and connection between Bangladeshis and Argentine football, making it easier for fans to support the team. Surprisingly, Argentina fans now support the Bangladesh cricket team, despite the fact that Bangladesh cricket is performing well in comparison to other games and sports.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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