

KHELAR ADDA

COVER STORY

With the World Cup fever running high and the fate of footballing giants hanging in the balance, Star Showbiz asks some of our favorite celebrities about the teams they are rooting for and the teams they think might lift the cup. This week we bring you excerpts from our conversation with football aficionados Iresh Zaker, Shahiduzzaman Selim, Peya Jannatul and Hamin Ahmed. The adda was conducted by Tasneem Tayeb.



Tasneem Tayeb: It's a great pleasure to have you all here today. The World Cup is turning more and more dramatic by the day, and it's exciting to have such passionate football fans joining us! Let's start with Hamin bhai! Tell us, which is your favorite team?

Hamin Ahmed: I cheer for the yellows. Brazil, forever!

Tasneem: Weren't you just saying that you vouch for the team that has advantage all the time! (Laughter)

Hamin: I was actually trying to feel the vibe in the room (Laughs)! You should always be careful about the crowd you are among, especially when there might be Argentina fans.

Tasneem: Perhaps we don't have any Argentina fans here today.

Hamin: That's a shocker!

Iresh Zaker: I have a whole family of Brazil supporters, so there has always been an anti-Argentina mentality around. But this World Cup, I actually prayed for Argentina to qualify for the second round only because of Messi. I think all the great players in the world should have a better go, when it's the greatest show on earth.

Tasneem: That's true! What about you, Selim bhai? Which team are you supporting?

Shahiduzzaman Selim: I was supporting Germany! I think the Germans kept their spirits high until the very dying seconds of their games. It is how they have been historically.

Tasneem: What about you Peya?

Peya Jannatul: Portugal forever!

Iresh: Being a regular club-football follower, the World Cup season is a rather relaxing time for me. For those who don't follow football regularly, this is just a month long test of anticipation. But we league watchers go through this nail-biting enthrallment week in - week out, for the whole season, every year! And since I am a diehard Liverpool fan, let's rather not talk about the tormenting love I have embraced. (Laughter) So I have a special empathy with Argentina supporters, because they support a team that is not really a giant threat, they have faced a lot of disappointments, and yet they always pass their loyalty challenge smoothly. I can relate to that very well as a Liverpool fan!

Tasneem: Liverpool is a team that has to endure frequent criticisms. And now there is Salah to add more fuel to the controversies, especially after his painful exit from the Champions League final.

Hamin: I think Iresh might as well have some feelings

for Egypt, because of Salah!

Iresh: I tend to be ruthless on this matter. I have been praying for the teams where Liverpool players are playing to get eliminated soon, so that the players can go home and rest for the league title! (Laughter) Every minute brings unpredictability. They might get injured any time. So I am actually happy that Egypt has been eliminated!

Hamin: For the 30 year long hunger of Liverpool to win the league!

Iresh: Yes! Let's face it, some of us might have seen Liverpool lift a trophy in our lifetime. But there are kids these days, who have grown deep feelings for the reds, without even actually having seen their club win the league! We have a Liverpool fan club in Bangladesh, where probably only a hundred of us have seen Liverpool win titles, among about 1200 members.

Tasneem: I think our instincts play a crucial role in forming our passions. My husband is a loyal Liverpool supporter as well; and now even my toddler roots for the reds!

Hamin: This is very interesting. I just started watching football one fine morning. It was totally random, I wouldn't even understand everything at first. But as I kept following, I got hooked on to Man UTD so much that now I cannot imagine supporting any other club. I studied Man UTD like a book!

Tasneem: Currently, Neymar memes and trolls have taken over the internet like a storm. What are your thoughts on it?

Peya: Yeah, we are told to not turn on the ceiling fans in front of the TV, or Neymar might fall down and get injured! (Laughter)

Hamin: This is becoming a regular practice, I think. Players are now more interested to somehow get tangled and fall, rather than striving to find their balance. Sadly, Neymar is having to take it on the chin, although there are many more players with this tendency. Neymar needs to learn to adjust and adapt to his opposing team's strategy. As we have seen in the first few matches, he wasn't being allowed to finish his usual pacey dribbling. So there were frequent fouls and interruptions. Every time the game stops, teams lose their momentum.

Iresh: I agree. Brazil might need to adjust their game-plan. They were playing with Willian on the right, and they already had Paulinho in

