

## FAIZ SUBRI'S SHOT TO STARDOM

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*Faiz Subri with his award. He was given a hero's welcome upon arrival in Malaysia from Zurich. Image courtesy of AFP.*

Have you ever imagined one day a Malaysian footballer would have stood tall alongside some of world football's greats such as Cristiano Ronaldo or Sergio Ramos? Perhaps the answer is "no" but a man named Mohd Faiz Subri did manage to defy the odds.

Born on 8 November 1987 in Ayer Hitam, Kedah, kampong boy Faiz had a passion towards football since childhood. He started to play for his school and even managed to claim a spot with the Kedah state team at youth level.

However, after nearly half a decade representing Kedah in the youth ranks, he did not manage to break through the senior setup nor garner any interest from other professional clubs as he aged out from the youth team. He was left in despair not being offered to play football for about a year.

Determined to prove his talent, Faiz tried his luck venturing further up north with third-tier outfit KSK Tambun Tulang, a small community club from Perlis. It was at this moment that his future would see a change of fortune in his footballing career as a season later he attracted Perlis' interest to play for them in the first-tier Malaysian Super League.

After two years with Perlis, Faiz travelled to the east coast to play for Kuala Terengganu based T-Team FC (2012), Kelantan (2013) and Terengganu (2014). The pinnacle of his career however was with Penang when he signed for them in 2015 and went on to play for the team for four years.

Helping Penang to gain promotion from the Premier League to the Super League in his first season, Faiz made the global headlines during his second for scoring a gravity-defying spectacular in a Super League match between Penang and Pahang hosted at the nearly full house Penang City Stadium on 16 February 2016.



*Mohd Faiz Subri taking the shot that made him a global sensation. Image courtesy of Danial Saad/Berita Harian.*

The diminutive winger struck the ball up high to the left before taking a swerve to the right, bewildering the opposition goalkeeper, who was left kneeling down looking at the ball rocketing into his net. It was indeed a mesmerizing goal that caught spectators jaw dropped.

Faiz's jaw-dropping goal resulted him in an invitation to Zurich to attend the prestigious FIFA Football Awards 2016 ceremony which was held to honour and recognize footballers for several categories of individual achievements. He was nominated for the FIFA Puskás Award, an award given to the most spectacular goal of a football season.

Faiz overcame the likes of superstars Neymar and Lionel Messi, who were among the top 10 contenders, to pave his way to Zurich as one of the top three finalists. He eventually bagged the FIFA Puskás Award presented by Brazilian legend, Ronaldo Lima after garnering

a massive 60% of the votes to beat the other two finalists, Venezuelan female footballer Daniuska and Corinthians' attacking-midfielder Marlone.



*Faiz Subri receiving the FIFA Puskás Award from Brazilian legend, Ronaldo. Image courtesy of The Sun.*

It was a very proud moment not only for Faiz but also the entire Malaysians as he became not only the first Malaysian but also the first Asian to be honoured such accolade. Heralded as a national hero for the achievement, today he is an inspiration to local fans and footballers to reach greater heights.

Who would have wondered that a single shot could pay off with global stardom? Perhaps it is worth bearing in mind to expect the unexpected. From Penang to Zurich, this is the story of Mohd Faiz Subri, Malaysia's pride and national hero.