

19/10/05 TT No.75: Ron Jones - Spanish Sojourn

On Sunday 9th October, I attended the **Santa Pola** v Burriani Tercera (Third Division) Group 6 match. Kick off 11.30. The Municipal stadium is only about a 5-minute walk from the Bus Terminal, some 20km from Alicante. Admission was 12 Euros; the pitch is surrounded by an athletics track, and has an elevated main stand with a high roof running most of the length of the side nearest the entrance. On the far side is a single row of about 50 open seats either side of the halfway line. Of course, I was not expecting a programme, but a club official posted a copy of the team sheet on a wall next to the entrance and I managed to get a copy, printed on paper bearing the club badge. This listed the line-ups for both sides with boxes for goals, substitutions and red/yellow cards next to each player. Along with most of the crowd of around 800, I sat in the main stand although drummers beat out a constant rhythm from the opposite side, and a few home fans crossed the track to watch from behind the goal, where temporary barriers enclosed the pitch. The hosts even missed a penalty as they failed to improve on the single goal scored in their first six matches, resulting in their fourth 0-0, of the current football season.

Leaving Santa Pola, I travelled by bus and train to Murcia, where groundsharer's **Ciudad Murcia** were at home to Xerez, in Division 2A, put back to 8.30pm for live TV. The Condominia Stadium is only about a 15-minute walk from the City Centre. For this fixture, tickets for the upper tier of the main stand were 18 Euros, surprisingly there was a complete lack of any souvenir stalls in the area around the main entrance and ticket offices. Passing through the turnstiles, I picked up a couple of programmes from a table just inside the entrance. I made my way up several flights of stairs, into the upper tier which has an excellent and unobstructed view. There were no stewards in this part of the ground so the seat number on the ticket was irrelevant.

The high roof over this stand, which has individual plastic seats provides the only cover in the ground, along the far side are high terrace steps used as seating, with the same behind one goal, except for a couple of rows of individual seats at the back. Behind the other goal are individual plastic seats. The pitch is surrounded by a high fence with even higher netting immediately behind the goal, although no track at this venue. Visitors Xerez had a vociferous following segregated into a corner, from where I was; it was impossible to estimate their numbers. The free "Revista" - magazine- contained 16 glossy (A5) pages with match details on the cover, included league tables, results with the visitors' details showing names and squad numbers, although no line ups for the home team as such. With a vast colour TV introducing each player with his photo, perhaps not necessary! The match had everything, a penalty and home sending off in the first five minutes, two more penalties (one saved) and some memorable goals as Xerez went to the top of the

league with a 6-2 win. The reported crowd of 3500 in the following morning's press seemed more than a little on the low side.

Due to the expansion of some of the Tercera League Groups to 22 clubs, scheduled midweek fixtures have been introduced this season, and on Wednesday 12th October I was at **Torrevieja** v Villareal "B" for a 5.00 kick-off, also in Group 6. The ground is about 25 minutes-walk from the Bus Station although local buses pass close to the ground. Arriving shortly before this time I paid 10 Euros admission, inside the ground programmes were on sale for 1 Euro. This 40 page A5 issue, fully printed in colour throughout is better than that produced by many "home" clubs at twice the price, mostly in English with two match reports and an editorial also in Spanish, and includes colour action pictures, and a map showing other clubs in this group along with stats and club news. The home squad feature on the centre spread, although there is no information on the opponents at all.

The Vicente Garcia stadium is a "proper" football ground with the fans close to the action, three sides comprise of 6 to 8 rows of very steep and wide stone steps which provide seating. Either side of the halfway line is a covered seated stand where the majority of the "Torry Army" of British supporters who have "adopted" this club sits. There's even a club shop at the back with replica kits and various souvenirs. Probably around 80% of the crowd were English, on a very warm (by UK standards) and sunny evening noticeable for appearing in t-shirts and shorts, in contrast to the coat wearing Spanish! Quite strange experiencing the British supporters cheering their team on in a game with moments of great skill but, as expected, where any physical contact resulted in the "injured" player rolling around the pitch. The Villareal "reserves", yet to concede a goal and top of the league were under pressure but held out in for another 0-0 with the attendance reported on the 'Torry' Website as 4,386. If you are in this part of Spain a match at Torrevieja is not to be missed!

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