

TT No.141: Paul Roth - Tenerife Adventure (Part 1) - Fri 2nd February 2007;
Spanish La Liga Inter-insular Preferente Div. **Club Deportivo Marino Los
Christianos** vs. Athleticco Arona; Res: 4-1; Att: 450; Entry: 8 Euros.

11 years ago, my wife and I both had a nasty bout of flu and as we were in the process of recovery our doctor advised a week in the sun would aid this recuperation quicker than staying home and enduring the remainder of our winter.

We have been so lucky where we have travelled, visiting every continent (except Australasia) and having had fantastic holidays in far flung places around the globe to weeks spent here in our own beautiful Counties that make up the British Isles.

So much pleasure have I gleaned from football and that has taken me to most parts of this country and a few abroad. On the way I have met people, some of which I am now proud to call my good friends.

Tenerife and the Canary Islands, Mallorca and Ibiza were very low on my 'places to visit wish list' and I freely admit to some trepidation those 11 years ago when we jetted off as to what we might find there on this most famous of all the Canary Islands. 'Kiss me quick' hats, cheap lager, The Royal Oak Pub, English breakfast for a pound.....etc, etc, etc. These things are all there but this makes up for the minutest amount of what this stunning island is all about. We have discovered a place, despite where else we have been in the world, that is not far short of paradise.

How many matchdays start with two hours sitting beside a swimming pool in 21 degrees of warmth, followed by an al fresco lunch in a superb restaurant next to the shimmering Atlantic ocean and the afternoon out at sea almost being able to touch Pilot Whales and our small motor boat being outrun by playful Dolphins on our return? Such was my matchday. Planning to go to just one game on the Sunday, I was checking the Futbolme website (surely one of the great football websites) for the kick off time for my chosen game in two day's-time when I spotted this game which had been advertised on street lamps in Los Christianos which had an 8pm kick off. Mentioning this to my wife, she said "why don't you go"? Honest, that's how it was.

The taxi dropped me at the impressive Antonio Dominguez stadium, actually in Playa De Los Americas, ablaze tonight with the light from the four massive floodlight pylons. After paying my 8 Euro entry I was ready for kick off. The ground has a running track around it and there is one huge stand on its southern side. To those of you who have been there, Dartford's new ground is reminiscent. However, this stadium is much bigger and without grass growing on top of it! The Northern part of the stadium is grassed and is obviously lovingly cared for. A raffle ticket was proffered for my purchase but I would not have known what to do with the massive side of ham that was the first and only prize. A huge bar area sold copious amounts of beer, wine, spirits and also dispensed the ubiquitous Tapas.

This local derby...Arona is 5 miles inland from Los Christianos, had a real edge. The visitors are top of the league and Marino lie 3rd. Marino were soon 2 goals up and then the referee made a huge blunder by sending off a home player for an offence that most present in the ground could clearly see had not involved physical contact of any sort. As the player walked down the tunnel something happened that I didn't see but the consequence was that every single player ran off the field of play and engaged in a pitched fight the like of which I have never seen before on a football ground. From that melee another player was sent off and I really thought the referee would abandon proceedings there and then; to his tremendous credit though he calmed all concerned down and the football resumed. I tried to get pitch-side at half time but was told it was strictly not allowed but the friendly club officials were so generous that they produced a club pin for me to keep as a souvenir. The second half was another tense affair but two stunning free kicks had put the hosts 4 up and only a late volley from Arona's no 11 made the score mildly less convincing than it really was. Marino, tonight, were on fire.

At full-time I stepped into the road outside and immediately caught one of the 500 or so local taxis back to the hotel (the driver told me there are that number), in time for a couple of sundowners and the evening entertainment.

FGIF Rating 5*. It could be nothing less!

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