

TT No.123: Gary Spooner - Sun 6th December 2009; **Port Pollenca** 1 Condor 0; Primera Regional de las Islas Baleares Grupo 3a; Admission: Free; Att: 100 (est.); Weather: Warm and sunny; Match Rating: 3*.

Sunday afternoon in Mallorca and Mandy and I are at the delightful ground of Port Pollenca for a Group 3a regional league game between the home team in 2nd place and Condor who are sitting in 4th place. It wasn't planned as my original choice had been to go to Xilvar but a sequence of events from the day before had changed my mind. Saturday, prior to a game at Pollenca had seen us travel from Palma to the Cap de Formentor, a stunning stretch of mountainous coastline with tremendous views after a hair-raising drive along a very narrow and very twisty road to get to the top! Whilst travelling along the road to the Cap we passed the ground of Port Pollenca. Placed next to the main road as it is, even Mandy had to concede that I hadn't engineered a circuitous route to go and look at yet another football ground (it has been known!).

I walked in to look around and there was a juvenile game taking place across the width of the pitch (Port Pollenca won 8-0). I strolled into the bar and enquired of a lady behind the bar as to the game taking place. She was unable to help but fetched a gentleman who could. This gent was a superb ambassador for the club and showed me around with great pride. He explained the pyramid system to me and was excited that Port Pollenca were currently in second place and hoping to get promoted to Group 2 at the end of the season. He showed me a picture on the wall in the bar taken prior to a match in 1958. He asked me if I recognised the famous footballer being presented with bunches of flowers. It was unmistakably Sir Bobby Charlton. Sir Bobby (just plain Bobby then) had travelled to Pollenca on holiday after the 1958 FA Cup Final (and three months after the Munich disaster). When asked if he would attend the match he had said yes. I wonder how many of today's stars would do such a thing?

Before leaving, this kind gent said that he would like to give me a gift from the club and returned with a superb steel keyring. He added that the first team were at home at 4.00 the following day and asked if I would be coming to the game. I replied that I would love to but I was staying in Palma and planned to go to Xilvar. We shook hands and he bade me farewell.

Sunday morning, best laid plans and all that! The club, it's stunningly pretty ground and the welcome I had received were telling me I should change my plans so I did. Lunch was taken in Alcudia and then a short drive along the coast to Port Pollenca. At the ground the ticket booths were not open and you could stroll straight in. I was instantly recognised and greeted like a long-lost friend. I enquired after a pin badge. Alas no, but more gifts of a car sticker and cloth badge were forthcoming before a much-needed pot (yes pot) of tea from the bar.

The ground has one stand and three sides of hard standing. The backdrop of mountains and villas is superb. The bar is adorned with pictures and trophies and there are tables outside to sit at.

The game was a tense affair. Both sides played some decent football and it was more entertaining than the game from 3 levels higher that I had seen the day before. However, as the game went on, it looked more and more likely that there would be no goals. (The Merseyside wits would slaughter me when I got home!) The clock moved close to 5 to 6 - how much injury time was it possible to play? Had they kicked off late? There was a clash in midfield. The Condor right back went off injured. The ref restarted. The ball went out of play and the right back signalled frantically to get back on the pitch. The ref ignored his pleas and play restarted again. Port played a ball through to where the right back would have been and Port No 23 hammered a left foot shot into the back of the net - GOALLLLLLLLLLL! The home fans were ecstatic, I was ecstatic, Mandy was spared my moaning on the drive back to Palma, The Merseyside wits would have to wait a while more! Angry Condor players surrounded the ref. The right back should have been on the pitch, he would have stopped the goal. No matter - it counted and Pollenca had recorded a win to keep on track for promotion. I hope they achieve it. A superbly friendly club in a superb location. If only all days out were like this!

06/20