

TT No.48: *Justin Holmes* - Sun 4th October 2009; **Portimonense S.C.** v S.C.Freamunde; Liga Vitalis (Portuguese Division 2); Venue: Estadio Municipal de Portimao; Score: 1-0; Admission: €10; Programme: None; Attendance: 1313; Match Rating: 3.

O the long and winding road along which football groundhopping can take you! Less than 24 hours after enjoying a game from the Mid Sussex football league at a typically rural English village setting with bracing autumnal weather, I found myself at the sun-drenched Estadio Municipal de Portimao on the Algarve for this morning kick-off between Portimonense and Freamunde in the Portuguese second division. It is difficult to plan to watch games in Portugal (and Spain), as kick off times are only confirmed about a week before the game and can be scheduled as early as 11.15am or as late as 9.15pm, from Saturday to Monday. After only touching down at Faro airport a couple of hours before kick-off, I drove straight from Faro airport to the ground in Portimao which took about 45 minutes, although with more time available the journey is also possible by coach or train from Faro.

As is also customary on the Iberian peninsula, I had to buy my ticket from a ticket window before entering the stadium, and on entering the stadium found a good old fashioned Mediterranean stadium with an all-seated capacity of just under 10,000, and with steep banking of seating providing an excellent close view of the game. There is no cover available, which means there is no shelter from the hot sunshine. For a national second division game, the attendance of 1313 was disappointing, but this is actually quite normal in this league, and so there was quite a sparse feel to the ground, although the fans that were there helped generate a lively, carnival atmosphere.

As for the game itself, it was a stereotypical Mediterranean affair between two sides who had made decent starts to their campaigns. The game was generally played at quite a slow pace but with flashes of wonderful skill and a sprinkling of predictable amateur dramatics. Portimonense always looked the better side, and although there were relatively few clear goal scoring opportunities, this was an entertaining game. Freamunde had a goal disallowed midway through the second half for offside, which would have been very harsh on Portimonense, but just as the game looked like ending in a goalless stalemate, deep into injury time at the end of the game, Portimonense won the game when a low corner was turned in from about 4 yards out, the ball squeezing between the post and the defender on the line, to provoke wild celebrations from the Portimonense players and fans and send their team to the top of the league going into the international break.