

**TT No.53: *Ian Hill*** - Mon 28th September 2009; **GAIS** v Orebro SK; Swedish Allsvenskan; Score 3-0; Admission: 190 SEK; Programme: Free B4 full colour; Att: 3879; Match Rating: 3.

Gothenburg is the home to three Swedish Allsvenskan League sides and the “three” theme continues as they all share the same stadium, the Gamla Ullevi. The Gamla Ullevi opened on 5 April 2009. The stadium replaced the city's previous main football stadium, also called Gamla Ullevi, and is the home ground of three football clubs: GAIS, IFK Göteborg and Örgryte IS. It is also the national stadium for the Sweden women's national football team. The new stadium was built on the ground of the now demolished old stadium. The construction of the stadium was surrounded by controversy, regarding the cost of the project, the supposedly low standard of the finished stadium, as well as the name of the stadium.

The three clubs of the Gothenburg Alliance (Göteborgsalliansen) – GAIS, IFK Göteborg and Örgryte IS – played the majority of their matches on the old Gamla Ullevi from its inauguration in 1916 until the newer Ullevi stadium was completed in 1958 for the 1958 World Cup in Sweden. From that year most matches were played on the large stadium with a capacity of over 40,000, but as the attendance numbers decreased in the 1980s and early 1990s, and in connection with the removal of the terraces, calls for a move back to the old stadium was heard. After a renovation, Gamla Ullevi was from 1992 once again the home of the Alliance clubs.

But playing on a stadium built almost 100 years ago was not ideal, lacking in service capacity, security, and architecture, the terraces having poles obscuring the view for the spectators. Plans for a modernisation of either of the two Ullevi stadiums, or construction of a new stadium were revealed in April 2002. Four different plans were presented; construction of movable seating on the short ends of Ullevi, two different ideas for renovation and expansion of Gamla Ullevi, or to demolish Gamla Ullevi and construct a new arena on that site.

Eventually it was agreed to build a new stadium on the site of the old Gamla Ullevi which now has a capacity of 18,800 of which 15,000 are seats. Despite being unpopular with some of the locals I liked the stadium and although it is basic it is one of the better new designs. At least there is plenty of leg room and the rake of the stands is good.

Sweden is a country I had never visited before so it was new territory for me. Thanks to Ryanair and my own poor keyboard skills I searched for a flight out to Gothenburg on a Monday instead of a Saturday and found that a return ticket costs £12. A quick search on Soccerway.com found that GAIS were playing at home on the Monday evening so with the flight booked and with overpriced hotel sorted I was on my way.

Transport from the airport is by coach which drops you off in the centre of the City next to the main bus and railway stations. The Gamla Ullevi is about 10 minutes-walk from the station. A few minutes away are the larger Ullevi stadium and then you cross a road to reach the much older Valhalla IP stadium. If you are into Ice Hockey then the “Scandinavium” home of the local Ice Hockey team is across a car park from the Valhalla. This is probably one of the easiest ground hops going.

It is easy to see who are the “top dogs” in Gothenburg. IFK have the largest club shop of the three clubs sharing the stadium. In fact, GAIS and Orgryte have to share the other shop. There is also a small bar underneath the main stand and a “Max” which is the equivalent of McDonalds in one corner. After your burger you can also go for a workout as a fitness studio is located under a stand behind one of the goals.

All the club shops were open before the game and you could pick up free copies of IFK’s programme for their last home game, free of charge. Likewise, GAIS issue a full colour 60-page programme free of charge. These are enthusiastically handed out before the game. It looked like they were all gone about 20 minutes before kick-off. The programme does have quite a few adverts but as it was free and the presentation was good, I was not complaining. Well done GAIS.

I paid 190 SEK (around £19.00) for a lower tier seat along the touchline. There were plenty of seats available and you could sit where you wanted to. There was also the possibility of moving to the upper tier to sit in the 255 SEK seats as tickets are not checked when you get into the stadium.

I quite enjoyed the game between the two mid table clubs. GAIS or the “Mackerals” as they are also known were the better side and deserved their 3-0 win. It was noticeable during the game that the home supporters do appear to be a bit split. The “ultra” supporters are located behind one goal with the “casuals” sitting in the upper tier alongside the pitch. The “casuals” certainly do not like the “ultras” as was clearly emphasised by a number of hand gestures.

Overall, I really enjoyed the trip even if it was short. The question is do I return to watch a home game of the other two of the three or leave it as a nice memory of a day out at GAIS?

06/20