

**TT No.85: Paul Roth - Balearic Double** - Sun 26 Sept/3 October 2010 - **CF Sant Rafael** (v CE Alaior) and **PD Santa Eulalia** (v UE Alcudia) (both in the Spanish La Liga Tercera Division Balearic Group 11).

Dildo-wielding strippers, lesbian nurses, gay dwarves, acrobats and circus performers - welcome to Manumission (freedom from slavery). Perhaps the lewdest, crudest and unashamedly rudest live show in the northern hemisphere - at one time it even featured live sex on stage - is just a miniscule part of the rip-roaring, outrageously decadent club scene that is 'IBIZA'.

In 1989 The Sun dubbed the archipelago "ecstasy island"; the authorities' Laissez Faire approach to drug-taking making it a must-visit Mecca on the itinerant junkie's world tour. Nine years later British consul Michael Birkett resigned his post describing the drunken antics of his compatriots as "degenerate". San Antonio - "San An" - had become a playground of debauchery for this country's youth who partied hot Summer nights away like brain-dead test monkeys. I have to say, if it's a 'Boite' you're after, Ibiza mightn't be the place for you!

It's this stereotypical image that's rather precluded and predetermined why we've never ventured on holiday here previously. Iconoclastic I'm definitely not, but best describes my previously incorrect, pre-conceived myths - which have since been dispelled - regarding Ibiza. Both of us, now back home, realise that we've been bewitched by her unrelenting beauty and uncanny knack for constant surprise.

A friend of a friend of a friend of our nutritional dietician who carries out our bi-annual yak placenta treatments has a villa there, and has repeatedly told us of its manifest glories. She had beforehand told us exactly where to base ourselves if we ever, quite literally, took the plunge and visited. So, after 30 years of neglect on our behalf, the magnificent Tropic Garden Hotel - located a kilometre east of Santa Eulalia des Riu on Ibiza's south-easterly coast - at the junction of Passeig Joan Mari Cardona and Caller Ray Reardon - was to become our luxury abode for the last days of September and the first few of October.

It was during the 1960s that the Hippy movement first discovered the majesty of this, the largest of the Pitiuses (southern Balearics). A few of these Bohemian-types still remain, the magnetic draw for them still as strong as it was fifty years ago. But what exactly is that draw? Maybe it's the plethora of hidden coves, miles of golden and family-friendly sandy beaches backed by steeply raked cliffs stacked with acacia trees, gin-clear waters fit for royalty to swim in, ancient towns steeped in history - Eivissa's (Ibiza Town) Dalt Vila is as stunning a medieval walled city we've ever walked within, the spell-binding countryside with its rust-red rich soil, those world-famous nightclubs the in-crowd travel the globe to party in (on the door, it costs 80 Euros to gain entry to either Privilege or Amnesia - 70 for the all-day ketamine-fuelled mash-ups at DC10), the island's renowned sunsets - an extension to 'Sunset Strip' has been built on San Antonio Bay's northerly extremity;

this area has exclusive, Uber-hip club-cum-bars packed with Fashionistas who flock in their droves to view one of nature's most hypnotic spectacles (a tear almost came into my eye as the sun's death knell turned the Mediterranean blood-red: 'La Cuenta' for the two Pink Gins we'd been sipping at the time did!), or is it the ocean-side Chill-Out bars where it's possible to lounge in hedonistic opulence whilst listening to now-happening, cutting-edge music. The truth is Ibiza is all of these things, and more. The reader may think I'm being obsequious; I am not.

But this wouldn't be FGIF would it, if I weren't recounting a footballing adventure or two? Luckily, for myself at least, and with my wife's usual blessing, the opportunity to take in two matches during our stay was gratefully seized.

**Club de Futbol Sant Rafael** - they compete in Group 11 of La Liga's Tercera Division - were fortuitously at home on the initial Sunday of our stay, with a midday kick-off versus Menorcan side CD Alaior. From Santa Eulalia there are infrequent buses that head across the island to San Antonio via Sant Rafael during weekdays only. Therefore, to attain my destination a two-bus journey was required, with the one change being necessary in Eivissa. So small is the island that this brush with public transportation was over in less than forty minutes.

Best described by your correspondent as a Two-Bit town, Sant Rafael has three claims to fame - four if you count the impressive football club itself. The celebrated nightclubs, Privilege and Amnesia - the latter is the football club's main sponsor - are based here.

But perhaps it's in its infamy that has made the town the talking point hereabouts during the past ten years. Provoking the biggest public demonstration in Ibiza's history, in February 2006 (a quarter of the island's population took to the streets in an unprecedented outburst of civil disobedience), the expansion of the road that links San Antonio with Sant Rafael literally split the island in two. As it stood, the highway back then was considered one of the most dangerous in Europe to traverse. The proposal to bore a four-lane tunnel under sleepy Sant Rafael meant the compulsory purchasing of ancestral homes, which in turn led to unedifying scenes of screaming grannies chaining themselves to bulldozers in a vain attempt to halt the work. Needless to say, the road has since been built, but the Partido Popular Party did lose political sway for only the second time since 1930 as a result of the unrest - many believing contracts secretly brokered made many politicians extremely rich. Today, although only two hundred yards from that completed carriageway and underpass, you're virtually unaware of its existence as you stand in the town's small square.

The Campo Municipal D'Esportes, Sant Rafael's home stadium, has luckily been blissfully unaffected by all this upheaval, as it's located half a mile out of town on the Sant Eulalia road, up a steep incline. Perched atop a hillock, there's only just enough room for the structure which has recently had a swish new grandstand built/squeezed onto its southerly aspect: in fact this is the only side that play can be viewed from, as the ground falls away dramatically or is surrounded by tightly encroaching carob and acacia trees on its other three margins.

The playing surface is synthetic and the ground possesses four newly erected floodlight pylons. A platform surrounding the stand's buffet affords the best spectator viewpoint, but it's when you turn through 180 degrees that your breath is taken away. From this lofty vantage point the coastal plain gently slopes seaward towards Eivissa's elevated Dalt Vila and the Med's turquoise-blue waters, with the smaller island of Formentera silhouetted beyond. This vista makes for the most spectacular panorama I've witnessed from within the confines of any football ground worldwide.

10 Euros bought me the best game of football I've to date seen in Spain, with the home side hell-bent on attack - their indifferent start to the season meant this fifth Jornada of matches necessitated serious remedial action. They had the lead on five minutes when their No. 5 looped in a header following their fourth corner, but were reduced to ten men on twenty when No. 6, Adrian Ramos, received a straight Tarjeta Rojas for a foul that was more akin to attempted murder. His booming imprecations, even though I'm not entirely fluent in such Hispanic terminology, echoed around the encampment long after he'd been dismissed from the field.

I thought attacking aspirations for the men in blue and white might end there, but didn't, as they continued to dominated the feeble visitors. Centre-forward Buti doubled their advantage soon after the longer-than-I've-ever-previously-known 25-minute interval and that looked to be that. Then, out of the blue, Alaior got one back; with twenty minutes still to play the match flowed from end to end, the result uncertain until the referee's final whistle.

The attendance was given as 300 in next day's 'Diario de Ibiza Suplemento Deportes'.

The intervening 171 hours - kick-off the following Sunday was 17:00 hrs- were spent sightseeing together and falling in love with Ibiza. We hired a car for three days - I doubt you'd need one for longer, especially given how regularly the buses run - that gave us the scope to descend into coves, caves(!) and beach-side Chiringuitos which would have otherwise been inaccessible.

The second match of the tour was in **Santa Eulalia** itself - another Tercera Division Group 11 fixture - and not half a mile distant from our hotel. After an overly-indulgent luncheon that had included Caracolas Salamanca - stewed snails in vermouth - and with the cherished one settled poolside, Pina Colada in one hand and vacuous romantic novelette in the other, off I set.

The Campo Municipal D'Esportes is, just like at Sant Rafael, a bit out of town and up an incline that's pertinently noticeable when ascended, carrying a heavy camera bag in the searing heat of the day. As before, spectating can only be achieved on one side of the arena where an impressive canopied, all-seated grandstand is located. The walkway behind this edifice offers excellent perspectives, again affording glimpses of the Med; a functional clubhouse lies at the end of this passageway, as does the well-stocked trophy room. The pitch again

is 3G and, as at Sant Rafael, four floodlight pylons are in situ. In truth, facilities are much the same as their rivals' from across the island.

But.....Pena Deportiva Santa Eululia provided me with things Club de Futbol Sant Rafael did not: the friendliest of welcomes for starters, unexpected generosity and personal touches that bore the hallmarks of a woman's hand.

I was graciously allowed to take photographs in the aforesaid trophy room, from the TV gantry - in fact from anywhere I liked and was furnished with a matchday poster, key ring and season's fixture booklet. But it's those ladylike touches that so impressed - potted bay trees were strategically positioned adding colourful decoration to the whole- the clubhouse is bedecked with flagpoles flying the PXD's (the moniker that appears on all their advertisements and merchandise) respective opponents' pennants in this year's Balearic Tercera Group 11 - cushions marked 'VIP-HONOR' (reserved for 'Socios' - season ticket holders) were placed on centrally located seats and comfortable armchairs accommodated dignitaries in the most esteemed position. There was even a CD of the club's 'Anthem' for sale - this was played over the tannoy before kick-off - having heard it I'm grateful it wasn't included in my 'Gift Pack'!

It's funny what 10 Euros can buy you; last week it was a cracking, absorbing game of football. This time, despite the 2-2 score-line that's often an indicator of good entertaining, the word lugubrious would best describe proceedings.

Unbeaten in their opening five league matches (but having only won once and been involved in the play-offs last term - they lost 2-3 on aggregate to Almeria B in the first phase of matches back then), just like last week the home side went ahead after only 5 minutes' play. There then followed 72 minutes of medal-deserving (on the viewer's part that is) tedium, as long ball after long ball failed to find its target. Amazingly visitors UE Alcudia, from northeast Mallorca, at that point equalised; 8 minutes later they had the audacity to snatch the lead as the homester's defence fell asleep. A minute later Edu Moral, by far the best player on show, glanced home an equaliser with his tanned forehead. The attendance - En Sufferance - was given as 260.

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The two clubs reviewed here are currently the highest ranked sides on the island within the Spanish League pyramid. However as recently as the 2008/09 season UD Ibiza-Eivissa were competing a step higher, in Division 2B, but have subsequently folded with debts reputedly in excess of 1,000,000 Euros. There are nevertheless many more venues where it's possible to attend a game on the island; in fact, Ath. Jesus - Jesus being a suburb situated to the east of Eivissa, now also re-contoured by the new motorway network - have a Ladies team competing in the country's Femenina Division Nacional.

The two football matches I watched formed only a small part of our wonderful holiday experience. Indeed, I have had my - "Sun-drenched, wind-swept Ingrid Bergman kiss" - but it hasn't been planted on my lips by my gorgeous wife on this

occasion: no, it's been delivered by another sexy, alluring temptress.....IBIZA!

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