

TT No.89: Ian Hill - Fri 3rd September 2010; **Sporting Fingal** v Bohemians; Airtricity League Premier Division; Score: 0-0; Attendance: 800 (approx.); Admission: 15 Euros; Programme: 3 euros, 32 pages.

What an awful game and a real disappointment for a “Dublin” derby fixture. The Morton Stadium was the last venue on my list to complete the professional grounds in the Dublin area. I’ve got to say it was a bit of a disappointment.

Sporting Fingal Football Club is professional football club based in Fingal County, Ireland. Former Shamrock Rovers manager, Liam Buckley is the club's manager while former Arsenal player, John Devine is the head coach. Sporting play their home games at Morton Stadium in Santry.

The concept for the club was effectively created by Fingal County Council as part of a long-term development plan for Soccer in Fingal. The ultimate goal was always to enter a team in the League of Ireland as well as the construction of a centre of excellence to the north of Swords. The plan was accelerated by the sad demise of Kilkenny City from league status giving Sporting Fingal the opportunity to gain membership ahead of schedule.

Sporting was founded in 2007 and was officially launched on 11 February 2008. The club was expected to play its first full season in 2008 in the newly founded A Championship, however instead they took the place of Kilkenny City in the League of Ireland First Division with Kilkenny dropping out of the League of Ireland. They had a successful 2008 season eventually finishing third in the League of Ireland First Division.

In December 2008, the club announced it was increasing its budget for the 2009 First Division season. Fingal had a massively successful 2009 season. They gained promotion to the Premier Division overcoming Bray Wanderers 4-2 over two legs in the promotion-relegation play-off. Fingal also ended the season as FAI Cup winners overcoming Sligo Rovers in the final, scoring two late goals to win 2-1. In doing so they qualified for the UEFA Europa League.

Fingal were drawn against Portuguese side CS Maritimo in the Europa League. This was to be Fingal's first ever game in European competition. The first leg was held in the Estadio da Madeira, and Fingal were on the end of a 3-2 defeat. The two away goals scored by Fingal gave them a better chance of advancing against Maritimo than many had hoped. The second leg ended also with a 3-2 defeat against Maritimo, in which Fingal was eliminated from the Europa League.

It has been announced that Fingal County Council will be building a new sports complex in Lusk. Sporting Fingal are expected to play games at the complex, which will contain a 4,200 all-seater stadium, upon its completion with the option of future expansion to 12,000. The complex will also have a state-of-the-art, training facilities and will be available for use to sports other than Association football.

The Morton Stadium is the National Athletics Stadium of Ireland and has a capacity of 4000 with an 800 seated stand. The rest of the ground has terracing which is raised opposite the main stand. The stadium is set in a park. Entry is at the park entrance where a couple of portable pay booths are located. A short walk is required to reach the stadium which has got a small club shop selling various souvenirs. A refreshment van was available for home supporters with portable coffee and soft drink stalls also in place. The set-up is a bit different to the rest of the Irish grounds I have visited. The stewards weren't very friendly and there was a heavy Police presence. The match announcer spent the entire game telling the spectators what was not allowed, I don't think anything was allowed! Sporting Fingal is aiming for a young support base as I don't know where the adult supporters watching them have come from. They are struggling for support but the whole set up has a plastic feel about it.

As with everything in Ireland at the present moment the football is overpriced and the match programme certainly was. Three euros for an A5 32-page programme was not good value for money as it appears a number of articles will be repeated throughout the season. It will be interesting to see how Sporting Fingal progress over the next few years and whether the new stadium will be built in the current economic climate.

07/20