

TT No.163: *Paul Roth* - Fri, February 3rd 2012; **CLUB de FUTBOL MOGAN v CLUB de FUTBOL UNION PEDRO HIDALGO**; Gran Canaria Regional League, 2nd Division, Group 2; Result: 0-2; Att: 100; Playing surface: 3G.

A short taxi ride from our hotel, along the twisting cliff-top carriageway, is the beautiful sea-adjacent settlement of Puerto de Mogan. Often referred to as the Venice of the Canaries, it was until the 1980s a simple fishing village at the mouth of the Barranco de Mogan. At that time, it provided shelter to a community of hippies and local fishermen.

Today, the transformation into a low-rise habitation blessed with bougainvillea-adorned, whitewashed houses that have pastel-coloured painted doors and window frames nestling beside bridges that span canals around a picturesque yacht marina and workaday fishing port, makes Puerto de Mogan one of the most endearing spots, not only on Gran Canaria, but anywhere on earth.

The local football team, Club de Futbol Mogan, ply their trade a mile up the canyon, where the GC-200 road heads inland towards the village of Mogan, five miles distant. I had arrived at the Estadio Municipal at 19.45hrs - an hour and a quarter before the scheduled 21.00hrs kick-off - just as Club de Futbol Union Pedro Hidalgo's (PH is a densely populated suburb of southern Las Palmas) contingent of players and supporters were alighting their team bus.

Little did I realise that five hours later I'd be on board the same vehicle, sharing the team's post-match food and swigging locally-produced Ron (rum) on my way home!

The captivating, one-sided arena has all its facilities on its northerly aspect. These include a 500-seater uncovered stand that has MOGAN depicted in white lettering against a blue - the club's colours - background. Worthy of a special mention is the canteen: from its esteemed hatchway came forth every conceivable alcoholic beverage, cups of coffee, mouth-watering cakes, sweets and virtually all other comestibles you'd care to think of. To my amazement a diminutive lady - a matriarch if ever I saw one - banged out cooked food that looked so appetising that it would have been good enough to have gotten her through most rounds of Master Chef. The plate of sardines presented to one lucky punter was of Michelin Star quality! Fifteen minutes before the start, the floodlights went out. The Estadio Municipal then remained unlit until an hour before midnight. Surprisingly, and after I'd pulled a lot of my already thinning hair out, the game then got underway. My angst that I'd miss my planned last bus back to Playa Taurito was now a reality; how was I going to return? That's when I approached the small group of flag-waving Pedro Hidalgo supporters. Their leader, Sergio Perdomo Suarez, kindly arranged for me to have a lift back on the club's charabanc, allowing me to enjoy the ensuing action angst-free.

Having won all but two of their league fixtures (those were drawn away), you might presume that the green and white-clad visitors are romping towards the league title: not so. At the time they were actually occupying only third berth, with UD Las Palmas 'C' heading the division, having won all their games. In a league that seemingly produces a plethora of goals - Las Palmas 'C' had recently enjoyed an 18-0 win over hapless bottom-placed Tasarte San Clemente - that this fixture only produced two, both coming in a first-half dominated by the visitors, was something of a disappointment. Actually, Pedro Hidalgo were made to work hard for their victory, but the 3 points were somehow inevitable.

As you might imagine, I was something of a curiosity on that return bus journey. As I disembarked at the roundabout that led down to our hotel, at almost 2am the next morning, I was greeted with a chorus of ...ENGLAND...ENGLAND...ENGLAND! Henceforth there will always be small part of me that's forever Pedro Hidalgo.

A surreal experience.

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