

**TT No. 164: Paul Roth** - Sat February 4th 2012; **UD VILLA de SANTA BRIGIDA** v **SOCIDAD DEPORTIVA TENISCA**; La Liga Tercera Division, Group 12; Res: 2-0; Att: 150; Playing surface: 4G.

The Campo Municipal de Guinguada is a thing of outstanding beauty. Set in a verdant, fertile, olive tree-lined valley that has a distinct colonial feel to it, the stadium first becomes visible from the narrow road that snakes down from pretty Santa Brigida, two miles back up the hill. Santa Brigida itself is located a thousand feet above sea level, on a busy road that winds upwards towards the island's centre.

Actually, located in the diminutive hamlet of La Angostura, access to the encampment is extraordinary. A bend that was even too sharp for our Renault Clio to tackle, necessitated my making a U-turn to descend the 1 in 3, track. This barely has room for one car's width. Initially I thought this couldn't be correct. It was though, as it brings you immediately into the club's small car park.

Now, from the other side, the edifice's stunning glory is fully exhibited. Set against a backdrop of a crimson bougainvillea-clad rock face, this old-fashioned arena has a feel to it like none other I've previously experienced.

Unfortunately, my wife and I had arrived too late to watch a game there. Six weeks too late to be precise.

The bane of the modern-day groundhopper had struck again. UD Villa de Santa Brigida have moved to a new ground.

Los Olivos' (The Olive Trees) towering floodlight pylons are clearly visible 500 ft above, high away to the left.

With time to spare before the 16.30 hrs kick-off, we took the opportunity to look around delightful Santa Brigida, stopping off at a well-stocked Farmers' Market, followed by luncheon at Mallows. Their staff, when they realised that we were English tourists, went out of their way, making a tremendous fuss of us.

For a new-build Los Olivos, I have to admit, is rather special. Surrounded by the colourful dwellings of nearby hillside villages and with cloud-covered mountains tapering up to the west, its most striking aspect is the arrangement of Cast-iron girders that wrap around the perimeter on three of its four sides. From a distance, this mesh-like structure resembles a Wild Western corral. If I hadn't known he'd died 20 years ago, I would have suspected that the legendary Canarian artist Cesar Manrique had had a hand in its design.

But like all new stadia, Los Olivos has an Achilles heel. The uncovered, stepped tribune is the only spectator facility. On that chilly afternoon, it's an uncomfortable platform to view from. Also, unbelievably, there isn't a canteen or even a public toilet in situ: these are located in the vast sports hall next door.

On paying my 5 Euros entry fee, I fell into conversation with a journalist (apologies senior, but I've forgotten your name) who was covering the match for Radio Canaria. Fascinated about what I was doing there, and having told him a little about groundhopping and FGIF, he asked if he could feature myself and the website during the half-time interval.

There you go Martin: FGIF's fame has now reached faraway islands off the northwest coast of Africa!

The match itself was technically excellent - the artificial surface aids skilful play no end - with the mid-table homesters producing something of an upset. In fact, they easily out manoeuvred the then 2nd-placed La Palman side, scoring a goal in each period, just before and just after half-time. Having also shaved the crossbar with a header and thumped a shot against an upright, they should maybe have won by a bigger margin than two.

Pity about the loss to mankind of Guinguada. Los Olivos is unquestionably an enviable replacement - if only it had a proper loo!

07/20