

**TT No.166: Paul Roth** - Fri February 10th 2012; **CLUB de FUTBOL VENEGUERA v UNION DEPORTIVA LAS REMUDAS**; Gran Canaria Regional League, Second Division, Group 2; Res: 5-3; Att: 70; Playing surface: 3G.

The inconvenient 21.00hrs kick-off time for this match necessitated me driving in darkness both to, and back from, the venue. To get to Veneguera my journey took me along the same cliff-top road to Puerto de Mogan that I'd traversed the previous week, and then inland through the township of Mogan itself. The carriageway then narrows, before turning sharply back on itself. Now starts an arduous climb, aided by continuous hairpin bends, out of the Barranco de Mogan and into the Barranco de Venuegera.

More a humungous crater than a canyon, this vast space lies continuously on your left-hand side as you inch northward. The road twists and turns its way for seven or so miles into the next canyon, the Barranco de Tasarte. Omnipresent below is the small settlement of Veneguera. Just above it is the only patch of green anywhere to be seen. This is Club de Futbol Veneguera's home stadium. The only road off GC-200 here veers off to the left and descends steeply into Veneguera itself.

I parked in the sleepy village and trekked up a rough track to the Campo as it was being opening up for business. I was fortunate to be greeted by Juan-Manuel, who spoke perfect English. Rather dumbfounded by what I was doing there, he nonetheless graciously allowed me in early to take my photographs.

I eulogise too much methinks, as I've run out of superlatives. All I can do is describe what was in front of me.

Built into the Canyon's side, this pristine little ground has a tribune of two rows of white seats running the entire length of its easterly facet, numbering 200 in total. A whitewashed and green changing room block sits below; the arena of course has floodlights, albeit of a low lux level. The canteen was again what confounded me. The now customary sea of alcohol was as usual available: but it was the home-cooked food I couldn't believe. Availing myself of a freshly-baked Bocado (baguette) filled with hot roast pork, my choice of fillings ranged from a variety of cold meats, Queso (cheese) to roast chicken.

On returning to pay the entry fee, I was granted my ingress free of charge. At the canteen's pass, everyone who arrived was told about the under-dressed Englishman (it was absolutely freezing cold up there), and his somewhat unusual hobby. I lost count of how many people's hands I shook!

This Regional game turned out to be my 'goal-fest' of the holiday. One up within ten minutes, the men in white and blue from the large coastal plain township of Telde, looked likely to run in plenty as they swarmed all over their struggling hosts. By midway through the second-half Veneguera had re-grouped and were now

4-1 to the good. Even reduced to ten men, they managed a fifth just after Las Remudas had pulled one back. The visitors reduced the arrear again and with the score at 5-3, had a clear-cut penalty denied them with ten minutes remaining. Thereafter, try as they might, they couldn't muster a further score.

Having said my 'Goodbyes' it was time to retrace my steps back to our hotel, only 18km distant: this took me all of 50 minutes to drive though. The myriad of reflectors on the crash barriers and posts are a welcome aid to passage. But my feelings are that these mountain roads are not the place to be at half an hour before midnight.

07/20