

LA LIGA 2

CD Tenerife faces stiff test against the champions



By Chris Todd

With just four matches of the season left, CD Tenerife remains well-positioned to retain a play-off place for a chance to compete in Spain's top division.

The play-offs can be something of a lottery and it is a shame that the blanquiazules could not have nicked that second spot and taken a direct route back to the big time. With Levante by far the best team in the league (and already crowned champions), second placed Girona has stuttered recently but they should be the team to join Levante come June.

All the clubs at the top are feeling the strain it seems, with Valladolid being the only team to win out of the top eight apart from the unstoppable Levante. The most positive thing with Tenerife is that they have found their scoring boots again despite missing top scorer Amath through injury (he is back soon). The negatives include players with niggling injuries and a failure to deal with dead ball situations. However, all the teams in the hunt are showing weaknesses and Tenerife has a great opportunity for promotion this season.

06/05/2017

CD Tenerife 2 Lugo 1

Lugo travelled to the island with hopes of making a late challenge for the promotion zone, but their hopes were crushed after this defeat. The midday kick-off was mainly due to a deal struck between the league and Japanese TV companies who like to keep a close eye on one of their rising stars: Gaku Shibasaki. As CD Tenerife general manager Victor Borrego told me back in January when Gaku signed: "We knew he was a good player but never



↑ Tenerife fans turned the town of Huesca blue and white for the afternoon

imagined that he was the David Beckham of Japan". It is interesting to see Japanese journalists and photographers at every Tenerife home game now. The match itself proved to be a deserved win for Tenerife even though they were not at their best it must be said. It was a decent enough game, with both sides attacking constantly, and if anything Lugo edged the first half on play, but more importantly Tenerife had that extra bit of quality up front and led

by an Aitor Sanz diving header after 32 minutes. However, disaster struck just after the break when Tenerife defender Jorge Saenz headed into his own net to level the score at 1-1. With time against the blanquiazules and ideas running out, on came Aaron and his neat skills changed the game. The winning goal came with just 10 minutes remaining when Aaron found himself in the box. His quick turn and shot cannoned off the post and

into the path of Choco Lozano who scored with ease to make the score 2-1. The rest of the game was played out without any scares for Tenerife and they came away with three very important points. Not a classic performance perhaps, but a battling one and at this stage of the season it is all about amassing points.

13/05/2017

Huesca 2 CD Tenerife 2

Is this a story of two points dropped or one point gained? The result itself is fantastic for Tenerife as it keeps them well placed in the league, and in the process it also stopped play-off chasing Huesca from gaining ground. However, the fact that the blanquiazules were 0-2 up after 30 minutes and looking comfortable suggests that the day could have been so much better.

Huesca is a small town about one hour from Zaragoza in Aragon. Their success this

before the half hour mark, it looked as though a thrashing was on the way. Japanese star Gaku was having his best game yet - a treat to watch at this level - and the defence, despite changes, looked solid.

The second half, however, started badly when left back Camille had to go off injured and was soon followed by Choco. At this stage, Tenerife had six of their normal starting 11 missing and lack of match fitness had started to take its toll. Huesca pulled one goal



↑ Choco Lozano scored the opener in Huesca

season has drawn fierce jealousy from their more illustrious neighbours, Real Zaragoza: mid-table nobodies this year. Huesca have been punching well above their weight but they are a well balanced, hard working side and that can go a long way in this league.

To get to the stadium you need to walk through fields, pine forests and pass by families enjoying barbecues in the warm spring sunshine. The game itself was a sell out with roughly 5,000 home fans creating a good atmosphere. Locals are very proud of their small club flirting with a place in La Liga, something unimaginable a few years ago.

CD Tenerife, backed by a few hundred travelling fans, started well. Choco Lozano fired the blanquiazules into an early lead and when Choco scored again

back on 75 minutes, another set piece giveaway by the defence, and with just minutes remaining a penalty was awarded to the home side that was duly converted. At 2-2 it appeared that both sides were fairly happy with the draw and there were no more attacks on either goal in injury time.

Next up for CD Tenerife is another stiff test against the champions Levante on May 20 at 6pm in the Heliodoro Stadium. Tickets are selling fast and with fan zones set up around the stadium it should be a cracking day. Roughly, Tenerife needs two wins and a draw from their four remaining matches to gain a play-off spot. With most players returning from injury and suspensions (including top scorer Amath), the team is in a good position but there can be no time for relaxation just yet. ■

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