

Carloway 3 Harris 1. 18/05/09

Stuart Rankin,

Jock Stein Cup Round 2:

Carloway 3 (2) Harris 1 (1)

Gordon Tago 3

Kevin Savo 33

Murdo Sqweg 64

Ali 'Koch' Morrison 37

At Cnoc a' Chailich

Gordon Mackenzie

Calum Mackay (80 ?) Andrew Maciver (capt.) Calum Moody Darren Mackinnon

Gordon Tago Billy Anderson Murdo Sqweg Kevin Macleod

Dan Crossley Kevin Savo

Substitutes used: Seumas Macleod (Kevin Savo) 56; Alex Smith (Murdo Sqweg) 68; Gordon Craigie (Dan Crossley) 88

Monday's beautiful late Spring evening was spoiled a little by a strong northerly/nor'easterly wind blowing the length of the pitch. Peter Dokus opted to continue with an attack-minded 4-4-2 formation as Carloway sought to maintain the momentum provided by Wednesday's creditable victory at Goathill. There was only one team change, Dan Crossley making his first full start in place of Kenny MacIennan (exams), against a resurgent Harris side still recovering from last season's nightmare. A place in the semi-finals was at stake against Back or United.

Domhnall Iain had hardly finished blowing his whistle when the Blues were ahead. Dan Crossley released Gochan onto a stumbling run on the right and his shoulder-high cross broke shin-high to Gordon Tago on the edge of the box, left of centre: Tago steadied himself and sent a rasping low drive into David Beaton's bottom left-hand corner. Immediately, Harris had a wonderful chance to equalise: a wind-carried kick-out cleared the Blues' back four but fell short of the goalkeeper. A Harris forward nipped in from the right and did everything right: he took his time, looked up, then lifted the ball over the advancing Mackenzie - but, unfortunately for the Hearachs, over the bar too.

This let-off galvanised na Gormaich: from a corner on the right Calum Tom headed over directly under the bar, then Dan Crossley slipped his defender but Beaton, one-on-one, made an excellent save, low to his right. Harris, unrecognisable in shape, pace, and movement to last season's squad, however, were competing hard and Gordon Mackenzie was nearly surprised by a powerful free-kick from the left on 25 minutes, which he managed to palm over. Then a hefty clearance by Mackenzie was nodded on by Crossley to Savo chasing free; he got there first and rammed the ball against the keeper, but the ball broke kindly for him, and he strolled on to convert.

Just as Carloway prepared to coast to half-time, a beautifully-taken free-kick from Fuggy on the Harris right cleared everyone and Ali Morrison, almost on the goal-line on the far side, got the neatest of touches to squeeze the ball

back across goal into the far corner. Crossley shot over, then on 40 minutes Calum Moody swung a high cross in from the left; it broke mid-high along the goal-line to Gochan but, under the bar, he somehow managed to lift it over the bar.

Harris faded a little in the second half, or Carloway improved, depending on which team you support. The Blues gained an edge, although Harris passed up a golden chance to equalise when their number 9 beat the offside flag, ran on, and then flicked the ball tamely at Mackenzie. However, a couple of decisive minutes were to settle the game: on 63 minutes Calum Moody controlled a difficult high cross into the 6-metre box with class, and flicked it back to Gordon Mackenzie - who picked it up. So, the Hearachs had an indirect free-kick about 6 metres out on their left-hand side. What's best in such a situation? Blooter it and hope it hits someone and goes in? Pass across the goal away from the wall and hope the ball's struck quickly enough before being blocked? Harris chose the latter; the ball seemed to hit all of the 19 players in the box before breaking in front of goal about 10 metres out to a Harris player who thwacked it against the top of the bar and over.

Moments later, at the other end, Billy Anderson had a shot blocked on the edge of the box, the ball was swung back in to the right of the box, Gochan got his head to it, and Sqweg coming in centrally, hit it cleanly from about 18 metres through a ruck, not hard, but low and accurately into the unsighted keeper's bottom right-hand corner, giving Beaton no chance. Both sides had a few half-chances after that, with Alex Smith and Billy Anderson shooting over, before Fuggy had a glorious free-kick on 80 minutes just clear the bar from about 22 metres.

Carloway will be satisfied with this display, just doing enough. Everyone contributed: the defence remained as tireless and solid as ever, Calum Moody even finding time to roam, and Gordon Tago and Gochan ran well, finding good positions and getting in behind the Harris defence frequently, although Billy Anderson and Murdo Sqweg were quieter than normal; Dan Crossley should be pleased too with an effective performance, beside the non-stop running Savo. Kevin Macleod shades my Carloway Man of the Match, despite his Kanu moment.

Harris were light years superior to the team that were beaten 6-2 in the last League game here of last season. For a start, they had a competent keeper (unlike last year, when they went through three in that one game!), and a resolute defence, organised by Fuggy, who must rival Donnie Macphail as best dead-ball kicker on the island. However, the main differences were in approach and organisation, a general coherence and commitment to getting forward; the next stage of their renaissance is to start taking chances.