

Lewis & Harris League:

Carloway 4 (2) Harris 2 (1)

Chris Macleod 6, 46

Steven Lennie 42

Dan Crossley 39

Iain MacIennan 48

Gordon Tago 62

At Cnoc a'Choilich

3.6.09

Ref.: George Macaskill

Gordon Craigie

Calum Mackay Domhnall Mackay Calum Moody DI MacIennan

Ross Bremner Alex Smith Kenny MacIennan Gordon Tago

Chris Macleod Dan Crossley

Substitutes used: Andrew VP (Domhnall Mackay) 45; David Macleod (Ross Bremner) 89;

Donald Chisholm (Dan Crossley) 89

The third meeting of the sides in 18 days had more at stake than met the eye. With a victory each - a narrow win in the Jock Stein Cup on the West Side for the Blues and an absolute tanking in the League in Tarbert in return from the Hearachs - Carloway were desperately in need of some League points while Harris knew defeat would end their surprising League challenge. In this League, with Lochs indomitable and Back just a shade behind, two defeats and you're out of the chase; you have no chance of the top spot by September, a triumph already beyond na Gormaich. A recovered Domhnall Mackay replaced Kevin Anderson beside Calum Moody; Ross Bremner (in his final game before his return to the mainland) and Alex Smith, substitutes against Point, continued in midfield.

Another beautiful night, albeit with what is now the usual icy wind, saw an early strike give Carloway the initiative. From central midfield Alex Smith picked out Dan Crossley running free down the right and his low cross ran behind a sleeping defence across goal to Gordon Tago who wasted no time cutting it back perfectly for Chris Macleod, in front of goal 8 metres out. His first touch whizzed through the legs of his marker and was passing the unsuspected Beaton before he saw it.

The Blues survived an untidy scramble in their box on 15 minutes which ended with a weak shot straight at Craigie and took the game to Harris: a Gordon Tago free-kick went close, then a dangerous Chris Macleod cross was blocked for a corner. Macleod shot over and then a real escape for na Gormaich: after Craigie dealt with a harmless long shot, Harris broke fast on the right and when a low cross came in, Lennie was on it but Craigie blocked well. Lennie was on the rebound instantly, but, uncharacteristically, gave Craigie time to recover and block brilliantly for a corner.

Despite this, Carloway maintained their grip on midfield, with Kenny Beag

directing play, Bremner forceful on the right, and Smith distributing cleanly. Close attention kept the ubiquitous Lennie at bay and David Grant was quiet in a withdrawn role. Up front, Crossley's and Macleod's pace and movement were troubling Harris, and Tago was able to advance frequently on the left. Chris Macleod found Crossley moving into the box but his shot went wide; then Smith had a drive from about 22 metres which Beaton found too hot to handle and the waiting Crossley flicked the loose ball high into the net from the 6 metre line. However, before the Blues had time to congratulate themselves on job (nearly) done, a Harris corner on their left broke to the hovering Lennie and he didn't waste this chance.

Domhnall Mackay made way for Andrew VP in the second half, which, like the first half, started with a bang. Alex Smith won the ball in central midfield and moved it on swiftly to Dan Crossley who, in turn, swept the ball on inside the retreating defender, to Chris Macleod racing in on the right of the box. Chris took one step and, from 14 metres, cracked a beautiful right foot shot high inside Beaton's left-hand post. Great move! Great goal! But, yet again, before the celebrations had died down entirely, along came the Hearachs (and Steven Lennie) to spoil the party. The Harris front-man beat the offside trap and ran clear of his marker on to a through ball on the left from Calum Smith but was block-tackled in the box; he recovered well to win the ball before the stranded Craigie could reach it but was forced away from goal, then turned and whipped the ball back across the face of the goal where an inrushing Maclennan, right in front of goal on the 6 metre line, met it about knee-high and knocked it over the line.

There was a familiar sense of *déjà vu* about all this, but Carloway didn't falter and kept coming forward. In a mirror image of Harris's goal, Crossley won a through ball before Beaton to the right of the Harris goal, turned away, then stroked it low back across goal to Chris Macleod, right in front of goal about 6 metres out. However, unlike Maclennan's, Chris's shot was worth 3 pts., not a goal. Next David Beaton held an Alex Smith shot, before Calum Moody headed over from a corner on the left. Na Gormaich finally clinched the game when, after a corner, an almighty scramble in the Harris box broke to Tago about ten metres out to the left of goal. His first-time shot took a slight deflection to keep it low and give Beaton no chance to his right. Harris didn't come back a third time and the tempo of the game now dropped significantly. On 73 minutes Harris did come close after a head-flick on from a corner on the left that brought out the best from Craigie, who then had to move smartly moments later to block directly in front of goal.

Just what the Blues needed before the Lochs game: two hard-earned, well-worked League victories, over combative, well-matched opponents. Harris competed hard and were as fiercely competitive as they were last week, if less dangerous - except for the ageless Steven Lennie, of course. Apart from knowing exactly when to break to beat the linesman's flag, à la Inzhagi and Gerd Müller, his ability to lose his marker and strike is an exemplary lesson to

any young player. Lose sight of him and you pay! For Carloway, it was a satisfactory night's work, with everyone performing competently and shape maintained throughout. Craigie and Calum Moody were faultless at the back, as usual, but Dan Crossley probably would be my Man of the Match for his tireless running, on and off the ball, his involvement in each goal (one himself; two assists), and the glorious other chance he set up for Chris Macleod.