

Coop Cup QF:

## **Lochs 9 (3) Carloway 0 (0)**

*Lava 5, 32*

*David Martin 34, 55, 77 (pen)*

*Nomie 48, 88*

*Robert Mackenzie 73, 84*

*At Leurbost*

*5.6.09*

*Ref.: Angus Beattie*

*Gordon Craigie*

*Calum Mackay Calum Moody Andrew VP*

*Alex Smith Kenny MacIennan Murdo Sqweg DI MacIennan Gordon Tago*

*Chris Macleod Dan Crossley*

*Substitutes used: Kevin Anderson (Kenny MacIennan) 45; Calum Macleod (Dan Crossley) 65*

After this week's two narrow but deserved League victories over Point and Harris, a depleted Carloway squad, minus Domhnall Mackay, Pongo, Darren Mackinnon, et al, could hardly have been relishing facing the top team on the islands. Unlike pop groups, governments, even Prime Ministers, Lochs seem to go on for ever. Lava, Nomie, Andy Murray, David Martin, and the Mackenzies are like the Tursachan, while we petty men come and go. Despite this, Peter Dokus boldly retained his two young men up front and opted for an adventurous 3-5-2 formation, not 4-4-2, or even 4-5-1.

DI was to track Nomie, Andrew VP on Lava, with Calum Moody covering, and Calum Mackay to pick up Martin, with Andrew Tago dropping back on the left as needed. Unfortunately, David Martin usually lies deep so Calum Mackay followed, leaving space wide right for the Lochs midfield to slot defence-splitting diagonals for David to run on to, or supply him directly and rely on his pace to propel him forward into the yawning gap behind Mackay. Likewise, on the left, Tago moved forward in support every time the Blues had possession, but the midfield repeatedly gave the ball away, and quickly, leaving Gordon stranded, and Andy Murray would whip the ball accurately to Neil Gibson, jetting into the opening on Lochs' right, in exactly the same way as Martin on the left.

A howling nor'easterly brought repeated icy showers to drench all present at Leurbost throughout. So, it was a miserable night in more ways than one - for a Carloway supporter. It started badly, and went downhill from there. An early Gibson break, fed by Murray, of course, led to a difficult hip-high cross. A retreating Calum Moody read it 6 metres out but it ricocheted awkwardly off his knee past Craigie. It may have been over the line before Craigie clawed it back brilliantly with his right hand but Lava should be credited with the goal for following up for the tap-in.

Lochs were relentless and na Gormaich chased shadows. Martin was soon free coming in from the left and from 12 metres flighted it over Craigie but just wide off the junction of bar and post. Then Gibson survived a blistering Moody tackle on the right to cross; Nomie flicked it on, and Lava hooked, but Craigie reacted well to catch cleanly. By application, industry, and constant tracking, the Blues managed to contain Lochs' creativity for 20 minutes, but like the Dutch boy at the Zuidersee wall, you can plug the gaps only so long, and the move which delivered the first goal was repeated on 32 minutes - Murray to Gibson, a better cross beating everyone and Lava at the far post squeezing it home, despite Craigie's desperate efforts to block low to his right. Moments later, David Martin was released on the left, came in, and placed it under an advancing Craigie. The half closed with the Blues employing a 7-1-2 formation, and Cameron Houston untested.

For the second half, man-marking was dropped. DI retreated to left-back, Andrew VP joined Calum Moody in the middle, and an unhappy Kenny Beag made way for Kevin Anderson as a breaking midfielder. However, within minutes, Craigie failed to hold a low shot from 18 metres and the subsequent scramble in the box led to Nomie converting easily. The tweaking hadn't worked, and the na Gormaich midfield were now exclusively employed as first-line defenders. Nevertheless, Martin soon escaped his marker again on the left and slotted the ball beautifully round Craigie into the far corner. Lochs relaxed now into their best Rossonneri *pass-it-around let-them-come-at-us hit-them-on-the-break* style, engineered by Andy Murray, and the Carloway back-line moved dangerously forward. A few chances actually occurred: Chris Macleod beat Houston to a long high ball, rounded him, then contrived to poke it past as he fell 10 metres out. Then Tago headed just wide from a deep cross. It was a brief respite, as Robert Mackenzie added another by firing an unstoppable right-foot shot from 20 metres low into Craigie's right-hand corner, after good work on the left.

David Martin burst free again and was tripped by a chasing Andrew VP just inside the box. Amazingly, Andrew wasn't red-carded, or even booked; maybe Angus Beattie was too busy keeping notes of the goalscorers' names to notice he was the last man. David Martin stroked it high to Craigie's right; Gordon did well to get a hand to it, but couldn't stop it. In desperate situations like this, the team under the cosh has a dilemma: do we now go for all out defence and minimise the damage, or do we move forward, in the hope that we might salvage some pride with a goal or two? Carloway, driven by Calum Moody who had kept the Goals Lost Total to about a third of what it might have been in a defensive *tour de force*, chose the latter and paid twice for it in the closing minutes, as, first Robert Mackenzie, then Nomie, broke from midfield, held their chasers off, and finished clinically.

Carloway were simply outclassed. Lochs, like fine wine, seem to improve with age, and the gulf between them and the rest (except Back) seems to be

getting wider, not narrower. They play like a professional side from the mainland dropped into an amateur village green league. Back can match them on a good day; Carloway, who at times have seemed to be on the verge of becoming the third force, can't - at all! The Blues competed hard but were simply swamped, their shape gone in minutes, swept away by an implacable force with no discernible weak spot.

Martin and Gibson were unstoppable, Lava and Nomie unmarkable, and Andy Murray absolutely exquisite - in his control, creation of space and time for himself, and, most importantly, his overview of proceedings and distribution. No doubt about my Man of the Match. Then there's the Mackenzies, John Uig, David Macmillan, Roddie Morrison, and on and on. It's a curious game football: at times Carloway can compete well with the Bacachs; they, in turn, at times can turn over the champions; but the Blues have only twice (last year in the League) come even close to troubling Lochs. The Jock Stein Cup Final should be interesting. For the Blues? How should the Carloway players react? Or the Niseachs after their 10-1 drubbing tonight?

Remember what Hiddink said to his team after the Barcelona game at Stamford Bridge: It's already history; what happened can't be changed; don't brood on it, but learn and move on. Think of how United beat na Gormaich 3-1, a few days after being absolutely mauled by Back. I'm sure Calum Moody will have brushed it off by now, after his second towering performance in three days, as King Canute trying to stem a claret and blue tide. Defensive general, sweeper, brutal tackler, creative ball-playing midfielder, free-kick taker, and auxiliary winger and striker - again, my Carloway Man of the Match.