

Jock Stein Cup Final:

## **Lochs 7 (3) Carloway 0 (0)**

*David Macmillan 26*

*Robert Mackenzie 37*

*Andy Murray 44*

*David Martin 65*

*Lava 74, 90+2*

*Peter Mackenzie (sub.) 85*

*At Goathill*

*17.7.09*

*Ref.: A.I. Macleod*

*Gordon Craigie*

*Calum Moody ? Andrew Maciver (capt.) ? Domhnall Mackay DI MacIennan*

*Kenny Dokus Billy Anderson Kenny MacIennan Gordon Tago*

*Chris Macleod Dan Crossley*

*Subs used: Darren Mackinnon (DI MacIennan) 64; Kevin Gochan (Dan Crossley) 64; Calum Mackay (Calum Moody) 79.*

In their last appearance in a cup final, in August 2007, Carloway faced the usual enemy. Doesn't everyone ? Every cup final in na h'Eileanan an Iar, seems to be Lochs v. A.N.Other, with the latter (except Back) usually getting pulverised. As the Blues did then. And now. One might think Lochs would get bored of the unremitting inevitability of it all, but no! Like Man.Utd., or the Old Firm, they clearly thrive on success and want more - and more - and more. Na Gormaich were simply swept away by a 70s' Dutch-style onslaught, "total football", unforgiving in its possession, movement, and desire for more. The men from Leurbost would have been quite happy for this training practice of a "contest" to continue for another 24 hours, and allow them to score another 7 goals - and another 7 - and another 7 ----- .

Carloway's strategy was straightforward: faced with the team with most of the best players on the island and which attracts the best players on the island or who come to Lewis, and comes at you like a perpetual tsunami, mark the most dangerous: Andrew Tago and Domhnall Mackay on Lava and Nomie, (which they did well before being swamped) and Calum Moody on David Martin (but make sure not to be dragged deep, to leave Nomie and Lava space to peel off and run behind); instruct the midfield to lie back, with one (Billy Anderson) as a central defensive shield and the others as a block to the advance of David Macmillan and Andy Murray, and hope that Gordon Tago, Macleod, or Crossley might latch on to the occasional forward ball. Fair enough, but Murray and Macmillan are such marvellously insightful, creative players that , like Beckham, Gerrard, Ballack, Lampard, Kaka, etc., stand 5 metres off them, and they will punish you repeatedly in unpredictable ways.

And so it proved in a blistering opening half where the Blues were simply unable to gain/maintain possession, and build from the back forward. An early melèe saw a header come back off the bar and the rebound go a metre over. A David Martin shot was then charged down for a corner by Pongo, before DI cleared off the line from a corner on the left. Moments later Nomie lost his

marker on the left and his hard, low cross was just missed by Lava. Next he robbed Pongo but the chance was scrambled away; a David Macmillan free-kick from 25 metres went just past. The pressure was relentless and it was no surprise when a stretched defence allowed an unmarked David Macmillan a free header directly in front of goal from a John Uig cross. There was a brief glimmer of hope on the half hour for the Blues when Chris Macleod beat Cameron Houston to a through ball but after flicking the ball past the keeper, they collided, leading to a half-hearted claim for a penalty.

Moments later, David Martin got behind the back four, but Craigie superbly beat his shot from 18 metres over the bar. However, three minutes later, Robert Mackenzie was on target, meeting a corner with a headed effort remarkably similar to Macmillan's earlier score. The game was now effectively over; damage limitation became the aim. Kenny Dokus and Kenny Beag simply could not get into the game and were being bypassed; Macleod and Crossley were isolated, chasing random clearances, and Gordon Tago, who had looked eager to take on the opposition in the opening 15 minutes, was now starved of the ball. A Lava header went wide, before Ali Mackenzie had a decent run and shot. Right on half-time Andy Murray tricked Kenny Dokus on the left, ran in almost on the bye-line, and sent a scorcher high over Craigie into the far corner.

For twenty minutes of the second half, Carloway managed to repel Lochs, through hard graft, good luck, and desperate tackling. After Macmillan went close with a volley from a low John Uig cross on 54 minutes, na Gormaich had their best (arguably their only) chance, when Chris Macleod headed just past from a Billy Anderson free-kick. Robert Mackenzie just missed with a header before David Martin robbed Calum Moody 20 metres out centrally, ran on, and slotted home expertly to Craigie's left. A minute later Dokus cleared off the line after a corner on the left, before Carloway's evening of fun and fulfilment really imploded in the last 16 minutes.

David Martin left Calum Moody for dead out on the left, made the bye-line and Lava converted from 10 metres. On 84 minutes Robert Mackenzie shot past, then a minute later a Roddie Morrison cross was driven home by his fellow sub, Peter Mackenzie (jun.). Craigie made two wonderful saves from Martin and John Uig as the men from Leurbost now strolled effortlessly through an exhausted Blues's defence, but was powerless to reach a curling, dipping cross from the right after an attempted clearance by Chris Macleod was charged down; Lava tapped home.

The same comments made after the Coop Cup debacle on 5th June (0-9 at Leurbost) apply here: *"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! The Blues competed hard but were simply swamped."* Lochs's success seems to stem from, but is not totally due to, an excellent midfield, mainly Murray and

Macmillan (my joint Men of the Match), whose movement, confidence on the ball, and creativity, set up the chances for two of the deadliest strikers on the island, Lava and Nomie, and present ideal balls for the best wing-half/winger on the island, David Martin, to run at and behind defences; this is not to undervalue the other squad members, especially Robert Mackenzie, all of whom would be first-choice players in any other island team.

Carloway ran and ran and ran, but simply could not match Lochs. The back triangle were immense - Gordon Craigie, Pongo and Domhnall - the latter two only sagging with fatigue at the end, and Gordon Tago looked up for it at the beginning but the pressure was so great that support for him - and Macleod and Crossley - simply dried up; Billy Anderson, also, worked like a demon but could make no impression. Andrew Maciver would probably shade my Carloway Man of the Match, for a tireless, talismanic performance, one saving tackle in the second half on Lava being especially memorable.