

Lewis and Harris League:

West Side (0) Carloway 4 (1)

*Dan Crossley 45+2
Kenny MacLennan 47
Ross Bremner 60
Gordon Tago 88*

*At Barvas
24.7.09
Ref.: George Macaskill*

*Gordon Craigie
Calum Moody Andrew Maciver (capt.) Domhnall Mackay DI MacLennan
Darren Mackinnon Kenny Dokus Kenny MacLennan Gordon Tago
Ross Bremner Dan Crossley*

Subs used: Alec Smith (Dan Crossley) 58; Calum Mackay (Kenny Dokus) 81; Calum Fraser (Darren Mackinnon) 88

Carloway entered this derby game brimming with confidence, after 6 straight league victories, during which they have scored 21 goals and only conceded 6; which, of course, makes their Cup form during the same period all the more curious as in 4 Cup outings (one, of course, against their opponents tonight) they have only scored 5 times and lost an astonishing 24! Fortunately, there were no enforced changes from Wednesday night, with Ross Bremner declaring himself fit after a niggling leg strain, though Peter Dokus tweaked his midfield slightly, moving Darren Mackinnon to an attacking role on the right. West Side appeared to be suffering from multiple absences, for various reasons: no Murchadh, Scott Graham, Donnie Smith, etc, and it showed later in the game.

A cold, drizzly evening gradually made way for a reasonably sunny second half. There was an initial scare for the Blues as West Side forced an immediate corner on the left. A headed clearance led to a quick-fire reaction shot that flew past Craigie's right-hand post. Carloway, however, soon found a rhythm and built their way forward, passing low and spreading well. Kenny Beag released Mackinnon but his shot was blocked well. The corner was headed out but Kenny Dokus, in a central position about 20 metres out, connected cleanly and twanged Gordon Kennedy's crossbar like a bow-string. The ball bounced on the line and was booted clear but moments later, a mighty Pongo clearance carried to Crossley, left to run free behind the back line but the ball was too difficult to control and the chance passed.

A West Side mistake allowed the young striker to escape again; he carried the ball into the box to the right but his parting shot slipped wide. Next, Bremner was blocked close in; then, suddenly, the men from Barvas seemed to have taken an unexpected lead: good play by Dan Macphail just inside the Blues' half freed him on the right to send a beautiful, high Beckham-style cross diagonally to DJ Macleod running in on the left behind the Carloway defence. He met it well to guide a header wide of Craigie and in off the far post; but he had stepped behind the line a moment before Dan released the ball.

Though na Gormaich had the bulk of possession and the play, West Side now started to have chances: DJ had another shot saved; a header went just over from a corner. Then, just before half-time, Craigie blocked a break on the left; the ball was whipped back in and DI had to head over his own bar. In injury-time, Bremner found Gordon Tago on the left, who reversed and crossed for Crossley to be blocked right in front of goal. From the subsequent corner, the ball ran low across the face of the goal and Crossley flicked it high into the net from 6 metres.

The news from Col Uarach no doubt galvanised the Blues to up the tempo as right away they forced a corner. Tago took it; Crossley flicked on and Kenny Beag met it squarely at the back post to thwack it home. Dan Macphail almost forced his way through but was crowded out 10 metres from goal. However, na Gormaich now had a grip on the game which they didn't let go, even when they lost Dan Crossley to a dreadful tackle by Duncan Maclean.

Bremner went close with a free-kick 20 metres out, before a break on the right freed him to cross low; Mackinnon missed his kick, but Tago moved back to gather it on the left, reversed and crossed; Kennedy did well to palm it on, but Bremner met it 10 metres out on the right and smacked it home. DJ Macleod almost pulled one back with a terrific strike from 23 metres which clattered the top of the bar before a great Blues' move went from Bremner to Dokus to Kenny Beag running in on goal but Kennedy made a magnificent stop with his foot. Bremner broke free but was blocked before a beautiful midfield ball found Tago losing his marker on the left, to run in on goal. As Kennedy came, Tago lifted the ball carefully over him from about 18 metres to bounce once into the net.

Overall, Carloway earned a deserved victory, though the breakthrough took a long time coming. West Side, however, might point to a few near things in the first half, which, if even one had been taken, might have changed the course of the game. Missing personnel no doubt weakened them, and even a sterling display from Dan Macphail, backed by Colin George, couldn't fully compensate; DJ might also consider himself unlucky, with the offside "goal" and a few other close things. On another day, he might have had a hat-trick.

Carloway must be feeling well-pleased with this display, which was their 7th consecutive league victory. No doubt, Cobby and John are consulting the record books. Once again, the back four and Craigie were as solid as could be expected, and openings came from opposition good play, not defensive errors. The midfield were assertive and constructive, Kenny Beag scoring convincingly and Kenny Dokus almost breaking Gordon Kennedy's bar; Bremner and Crossley were tireless and deserved a goal each.

Playing on the ground suits Gordon Tago who always controls the ball and thinks, and doesn't half take goal chances well: tonight; the cracker on Wednesday against Back; low to David's Beaton's left in the JS Cup; at Goathill against Colin Macritchie in the same Cup, and so on - my Man of the Match. On Monday 3rd August, Lochs play Back. Which result are the Blues

hoping for?