

Lewis Cup SF:

Lochs 1 (0) Carloway 2 (1)

David Martin 47

Ross Bremner 6, 56

At Leurbost

17.8.09

Ref.: Angus Beattie

Gordon Craigie

*Darren Mackinnon Calum Tom Moody Domhnall Mackay DI MacIennan
Alex Smith Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Kenny MacIennan Gordon "Tago" Macdonald
Seumas Macleod Ross Bremner (68 ?)*

Cameron Houston

*Peter Mackenzie Ali Mackenzie Alex "Tippex" Maciver
Jonathan Smith Robert Mackenzie David Macmillan (74?) John "Uig" Morrison David
Martin*

Don "Lava" Macleod Donald "Nommie" Macdonald

*Substitutes used: Peter "Robbie" Mackenzie (Jonathan Smith) 45; Andy Murray (Peter
"Robbie" Mackenzie) 71*

Ah, Leurbost. Field of Dreams? Field of Nightmares, more like. The position assumed by the Gazette photographer - behind Craigie's goal - said it all. On the Blues' s last "jaunt" here, in June, they were minus Domhnall Mackay, Pongo, Darren Mackinnon, and several others, yet still opted for an adventurous 3-5-2 formation. However, this soon disappeared beneath a claret and light blue tsunami, which made their next "reunion", at Goathill in the JS Cup Final, not exactly an occasion to anticipate with glee. And so it proved, in a blistering opening half where the Blues were simply unable to gain/ maintain possession, their tactics in shreds by midway through the first half, as they tried to man-mark a 70s/ 80s Dutch-type attacking force whose continual shape-shifting was unpredictable. However, in football, as in every walk of life, one must face, and exorcise, one' s demons.

Tonight, Andrew Maciver and Kevin Macleod were both unavailable, so Alex Smith was preferred to Billy Anderson in midfield, with Ross Bremner returning up front beside Seumas Macleod. The sight of Andy Murray on the Lochs' bench must have been particularly gratifying, and a little-known face on the right, Jonathan Smith, was viewed with apprehension.

Lochs' s approach was predictable, 3-5-2 (why change it?), whereas Carloway seemed to have abandoned their previous stand-off man-marking tactic, keeping their shape and marking space, though DI looked joined-at-the hip to Nommie. The pattern of play was established right away: Lochs spread, moved fast into open space, and struck the early ball. Immediately, Martin was sent free on the left but swept across and wide. Then, unexpectedly, na Gormaich achieved something they had failed to do in 251 minutes' play: they scored against Lochs! A long kick-out from Craigie went bouncing deep to the right of the Lochs box. Houston came out, but the Mackenzies got into a fankle as the ball bounced high between them, and the lurking Bremner reacted most quickly with a left-foot hook/ lob over them and the stranded

keeper into the net.

It was only a blip as Lochs resumed their drive towards the Carloway goal, though, first, Kenny Beag came close with a drive over the bar from 22 metres. A Macmillan free-kick 23 metres out found Lava in a crowded box, but his header didn't have enough power in it. Then a beautiful nutmeg move on the right freed Smith to convert but he moved a metre offside to receive the return pass. Next, Robert Mackenzie headed over from a Nommie corner on the left, but the Blues, although troubled by the switching, relentless nature of Lochs coming forward and having to run-run-run and cover-cover-cover, didn't fall into the trap of being dragged around by its shifting nature, stayed close, and still managed to connect with the tireless Macleod and Bremner up front, mainly through the long ball.

Then, on the half-hour, a Martin corner was whacked against the junction of bar and post, before Lava moved to finish from a through ball but, like Smith earlier, he had broken an instant too soon. Macmillan was crowded out by Moody and shot over, before Craigie palmed a deep cross-cum-shot superbly over the bar. On 42 minutes, the holders' best chance materialised but the ball arrived inches behind Martin 8 metres out and he mishit in front of goal. The half ended with Martin releasing Lava, but Craigie saved well.

Na Gormaich were in familiar territory; last year in May, they even went in two ahead at half-time in the League. The second half opened with Peter "Robbie" replacing Smith, as Lochs sought the breakthrough, and, just like the two openers at Goathill, a corner unlocked the door: Nommie's head-high cross from the left bounced awkwardly across the face of the goal and David Martin met it unchallenged to power a header past Craigie from 8 metres. Lochs scented blood, and Craigie had to move sharply to bundle a Macmillan shot round the post, but as the boys from Leurbost increasingly pressurised in numbers, the Blues' s long balls released their irrepressible front men, now benefitting from looser marking.

A nod on from Macleod saw a Bremner run and tap saved; then Ross was released on the right, but his attempt to power a shot home one-on-one on Houston was brilliantly blocked low to the keeper's left. A minute later a howler on the left corner of the box gifted Carloway the lead. DI won the ball on the wing, about 15 metres into the Lochs half, and swung the cross over low. Again, as Houston came for it, the Lochs back-line didn't deal with it, and the ball spun through them all to an unmarked Bremner, unmarked 10 metres in front of goal, and he promptly thwacked it home, off the underside of the bar.

Suddenly, Carloway had chances: a Tago slip allowed Kenny Dokus to fire just past; then the pace of another searching DI cross caused it to elude Bremner at the far post. However, the Claret and Blues steadied themselves and midway through the half had their best two chances. On 65 minutes Craigie made a tremendous block on a Macmillan header but, in the subsequent scramble, the ball was eventually booted clear. A minute later, Gordon was knocked off his feet by a Lava drive inside the box and the

rebound sent home, but Angus Beattie adjudged Lava to have been impeding Carloway's fallen hero as the conversion was made.

A war of attrition now developed, as Lochs tightened their grip and play focussed in the Carloway half, with the Lochs midfield controlling play. However, territorial dominance and possession don't always lead to goals, as the Blues themselves found out to their cost against Point on Friday. Craigie saved well from Macmillan, before Dokus went close at the other end. Nevertheless, na Gormaich's back four didn't weaken, and, ably assisted by Craigie and Kenny Beag, denied Lochs any further clear-cut chances. Indeed, right at the death, Bremner was once more sent free, but as he tried to kill the tie by slipping the ball under Houston to his left, the keeper made another brilliant block.

Clearly this was a sterling performance from Carloway, proving to themselves that they can actually compete with the best team on the island. Lochs, however, will look back ruefully at these 90 minutes and believe they didn't deserve to lose. A draw would certainly have been a fair result, but it was a cup game so there had to be a winner. The verb, "deserve", is used a lot in sport: "*we deserved to win*"; "*we didn't deserve to lose*". If you accept this notion of "*desert*", then Lochs didn't "*deserve*" to lose tonight, just as Carloway didn't "*deserve*" to lose on Friday. But they did; it always comes back to who scores more goals. That's how a game is decided.

Lochs played as well as they had done in their previous games against the Blues this season; two moments of indecision at the back and a slight lessening of sharpness up front - plus bad luck, of course - loosened their grip on a cup which has grown roots in their trophy room. Their drive and creativity in midfield was as apparent as ever, through Macmillan, Martin, and Robert Mackenzie, the last particularly impressive as he conducted a game-long personal duel with Kenny Beag, after surviving particularly brutal treatment, mainly on the right, in the first half.

For Carloway, once again, Craigie, the back four, with Kenny Beag blunting everything just in front, formed the foundation of this victory. Unlike in the two crushing defeats, Carloway tried to play to their own strengths, their way, rather than tailor everything to confront an opposition, which is regularly irrepressible. Mackinnon and Maclennan shone as wing backs, and the rest ran themselves into the ground, with Domhnall's weight and tackling decisive.

After the 0-9 mauling, I wrote, "*(This was) Calum Moody('s) 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.*" I see no reason to change my opinion. In the main, this description applies perfectly to Calum's performance tonight.