

Lewis and Harris League:

## **Ness 2 (1) Carloway 4 (2)**

*Domhnall Cheocaidh 14, 87 Alex Smith 2  
Gordon Tago 26, 57  
Kevin Macleod 72*

*At Ness  
28.8.09  
Ref.: Calum Macleod*

*Gordon Craigie  
Darren Mackinnon Calum Moody Andrew Maciver (capt.) DI MacIennan  
Alex Smith Kenny Dokus Kenny MacIennan Billy Anderson Gordon Tago  
Seumas Macleod*

*Subs used: Kevin Gochan (Andrew Maciver) 45 (? 61); Calum Mackay (Kenny MacIennan)  
77; Andrew VP (Seumas Macleod) 81*

Football is like any other aspect of life: after a night of misery, you simply have to get up the next day, and the next, and get on with it. Hence, Carloway dragged themselves to Ness for their final League game of the season, remaining hopeful the Bacachs imploded at Col Uarach against Aths. Conditions were whatever the opposite of "ideal" is, with a roaring northerly wind down the length of the field, making anything approaching ball control unusual. Any pass downwind above shoulder-height took off like a V2 rocket and ended up in Skigersta or even Tolsta.

As on a roulette wheel, it was nigh on impossible to anticipate where it was going to go next. Gordon Craigie played, despite a shoulder injury, and Kevin Macleod was back from a groin strain, but started on the bench. Domhnall Mackay was unavailable, so Andrew Maciver dropped back to central defence, with Billy Anderson coming in to strengthen the midfield. Saggy was unavailable for the Niseachs.

An early sign of the difficulties to come arrived when DI whipped in a low cross from the left. The ball hurtled across the face of goal where Alex Smith got the slightest of touches, 8 metres out, to send it flashing past a stranded Sweeney. Then Pongo broke from defence down the right but his diagonal cross just eluded the head of an advancing attacker. Next, a Billy Anderson through ball released Kenny Beag but he was upended on the edge of the box; the resultant free-kick flew well-over. The wind was helping the Blues' midfield to dominate play at this point but the final ball was repeatedly overhit into the car park.

Ness were struggling to get out of their own half; Sweeney's kick-outs would be caught in the air, then blown back into his own half. Domhnall Cheocaidh took to dropping back, bringing the ball down, and laying it back to midfielders who tried the Jimmy McIlroy-type pass diagonally through na Gormaich's back line, inside DI, for Kenny Macleod to break down the right. And so, in Ness's first real attack, this move led to Macleod's low cross being met perfectly by the galloping Domhnall Cheocaidh at the near post and flicked home Careca-style like a rocket into the far corner. Craigie didn't even see it.

Apart from half a dozen interludes like this, and resultant corners, the wind-assisted procession continued for the half towards Sweeney. A Tago header from a Mackinnon cross whizzed past; then a Mackinnon snap shot from 22 metres brought out a brilliant one-handed save from the keeper. Tago was blocked and a saving tackle denied Anderson at the last moment. Finally, Carloway added to their total, when a waist-high Dokus ball from right midfield was just missed by an advancing Kenny Beag distracting the defence, but chopped home by an unmarked Tago running in at the far post. The half ended with a Kenny Beag header from a Tago corner being cleared off the line.

Pongo didn't appear for the second half, due to an ugly collision of heads midway through the first. The Blues seemed confident the teams' roles would not be reversed, now Ness had the gale behind them, as Kevin Gochan came on, and Kenny Beag and Gordon Tago pressed forward, resulting in a Lochs-style 3-5-2 formation. It worked. Immediately Gochan was freed on the left 12 metres out but a Ness leg foiled him; then a Dokus drive was saved and Gochan frustrated on the rebound, before a beautiful through ball from Smith allowed an advancing Tago to convert.

Moments later, a high bouncing Ness free-kick from right midfield came back off the corner of Craigie's bar. Then Gochan, who was conducting a light wrestling competition with most of the Niseach defence, managed to get Chris Macdonald and himself booked out on the left touchline. Billy Anderson just failed to connect with a Tago free-kick, before Gochan had an interesting couple of minutes. First, he was almost red-carded for a shoulder charge into the chest of a jumping Ness player; then he sent a free-kick bouncing on to the bar.

Gochan now concentrated on football, rather than unarmed combat, and the Ness defence struggled to contain Gordon Tago and him. On 65 minutes Tago set him up but Sweeney made an excellent push over the bar from his shot. Five minutes later, he sent a looping header on to the top of the bar, but immediately after, an exquisite Macleod ball freed him through the middle, and he flicked the ball past the helpless keeper.

The game ended with – the ***Most Amazing Goal of the Season***. Midway into the Carloway half, out on the left, a Ness free-kick was lifted high and diagonally into the Carloway box. Immediately Domhnall Cheocaidh dashed off his marker to the right of the box and, as the ball came down to him, he met it perfectly on the bounce to lift it high over the advancing Craigie and down under the bar. It was an astounding conversion, which left players and spectators gobsmacked! A pity POD wasn't here to record it!

It's difficult to judge any team in such conditions. There were two major differences between the teams, which ultimately decided who won. Firstly, Carloway had something to play for: there was still the outside chance that Back might still slip up, so a victory here was important; also, next Friday is the Lewis Cup Final and everyone wanted to impress Peter Dokus and be

selected. Secondly, harnessing the wind: in the first half, the Blues struggled to play with it, but Ness found it even harder to play against.

The Kenny Macleod option worked a few times, but he faded in the second half and was eventually substituted; their most effective player in the reverse fixture at Cnoc a'Choilich last July, Angie Campbell, was rarely able to feature in attack, leaving Domhnall Cheocaidh, their most difficult player to handle, isolated up front, like Ben Gunn on Treasure island.

The Blues must be fairly satisfied with this showing, with decent performances all round. In the second half, Carloway worked hard to keep the ball low, and run with it and off it. Indeed, as the second half progressed, the Carloway attack discovered a rich vein of form, with Gordon Tago (outstanding throughout and my Man of the Match), Gochan, and Seumas Macleod continually tormenting Ness at the back, and Kenny Dokus having an excellent final half-hour on the right midfield.