

Lewis and Harris League:

Carloway 1 (0) West Side 1 (0)

Darren Mackinnon 46

Colin George Morrison 77

At Cnoc a'Choilich

16.4.10

Ref.: D. J. Maclean

Gordon Craigie

*Ed Ansell Andrew Maciver (capt.) Domhnall Mackay? Andrew "V.P." Macleod
Darren Mackinnon Donnie Macphail? Kenny "Beag" MacIennan Gordon "Tago"
Macdonald*

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Archie Macdonald

*Subs used: Seumas Macleod (Andrew "V.P.") 55; Murdo "Squegg" Macleod (Donnie
Macphail) 78?; Calum Macleod (Kenny MacIennan).*

A miserably overcast cold night, punctuated by driving showers, witnessed the first official West Side derby of Season 2010. For the Blues, the suspensions of Calum Moody and Kevin Macleod, plus injury to DI MacIennan, allowed Ed Ansell to start at right back in a flat back four, while Darren Mackinnon switched to right wing half, and Kenny Dokus pushed forward to partner Archie Uibhisteach up front. Na Siaraich had first half wind "advantage", if you could call it that, as the strong south-westerly carried every pass of theirs above shoulder-high 30 metres further than intended, and blew any Blues' clearance back in their faces.

Na Gormaich started brightly as they took the game to a West Side clearly struggling, at first, to harness the elements. Archie Macdonald shot over from a good central position, then sent a right foot shot just past from 12 metres, after a corner on the left. Next, Dan MacIennan had to drop fast to snuff out another try from the same player, before Kenny Dokus charged down an attempted clearance in the West half and broke free on the left; on the 6 metre box, he reverse-turned to square, but Murchadh brilliantly intercepted to boot clear from the onrushing Uibhisteach.

However, on 14 minutes the flow of the game changed dramatically: Domhnall Mackay half-killed Scott Graham about 30 metres out, as he twisted round to the right and away from him, and Colin George had his first chance to fine-tune the hairs on his sights on the Carloway goal. He cleared the wall centrally but Craigie blocked the nasty, swirling ball on his knees, on the goal-line; the ball spun up alarmingly, and Craigie recovered well to reach up and paw the ball away for a corner as a horde of blue shirts rushed in.

Na Siaraich now took the initiative and in an amazing 3-minute spell should have scored three times: a through ball on 20 minutes cleared Carloway's central defence and Walker raced clear on goal; he steadied himself on the edge of the box and chipped the onrushing Craigie - only to see the ball come back off Craigie's left-hand post. A scramble ensued and the ball once more came though to Graham, clear on goal, but this time Craigie saw it coming and blocked him excellently. Still the ball ran loose, and was eventually fed

out to the left where a swift low cross was snatched at by Pongo - and came back off Craigie's right-hand post ! A series of corners followed: Pongo redeemed himself by heading an inswirling corner from the right past on the left; then Craigie flicked the resulting corner on for another on the right. West Side had control, though Tago did break left on the left and swept the ball in, only for it to be cleared off the line. Moments before half-time, Colin George had another dangerous strike deflected past for what seemed like na Siaraich's 40th corner of the first half!

Immediately, Carloway took an unexpected lead. Kenny Dokus was released on the left and his low sharp cross was met sweetly by Darren Mackinnon at the near post on the 6-metre line, just ahead of Dan MacLennan and a defender, to fire high into the net. West Side did wobble a little but managed to re-establish their grip on midfield quickly. 10 minutes in, Peter Dokus sacrificed Andrew V.P., Mackinnon went left, and Seumas Macleod came on as right field attack, but still the Blues toiled: they were unable to force the pace, and continued to live dangerously at the back. On 61 minutes. D.J. shot narrowly over from 20 metres, then a Walker shot from the left was bravely blocked by Craigie, before being sidefooted past when it looked easier to score.

More luck for the Blues on 70 minutes when a high ball beating Domhnall Mackay was seized on by Graham and as he ran in on goal, a wrestling match between the two brought the latter down. Fortunately for na Gormaich, a free-kick was awarded on the edge of the box, and the fact that Domhnall appeared to be the last man was ignored. The free-kick came to nothing. Moments later, Craigie did his usual Lev Yashin, with an incredible low save deep to his right from a snap shot just outside the box. Then, on 77 minutes, Dame Fortune finally smiled on na Siaraich. A pretty soft award, for holding by Mackay on Graham on the edge of the box, but the finest of strikes took Colin George's drive into the top right corner. An absolute beauty! Hard luck on Craigie, though, who got to it, but its power was too much to keep out.

The game opened up after that, but the chances still fell to West Side. Right at the death, two golden opportunities presented themselves: first a square pass from the left, provided an intruding striker with a chance of glory: unfortunately it metamorphosed into a Kanu-moment; right on the goal-line unmarked, he sent the ball straight up, then, moments later, after a stramash in the Carloway area, the ball was squeezed past Craigie - and past the post.

Certain phrases spring to mind after this game: e.g. "Great Escape", "Daylight Robbery", for a start. The West Side boys must have left the field wondering how on earth they did not win. The answer is, " No reason. That's football". After 30 minutes they could have had the game wrapped up. Their midfield ran the game, with Colin George especially outstanding (my Man of the Match). Their defence was soundly marshalled by Murchadh (and still coped well after his departure), and Scott Graham and D.J. were uncontainable up front. A fruitful season surely lies ahead.

Regarding na Gormaich, no one actually played badly. In fact, they were up

for it. It simply wasn't their night. It was a terrific game to watch, a smashing advert for island sport, fortunately devoid of the usual aggro that punctuates these collisions - apart from a few unresolved personal issues between the Macphails on either side. On the night, na Siaraich just seemed keener, quicker, and more aware tactically of their purpose. Fortunately, Gordon Van Der Sar was on song, and provided an exquisite performance (my Carloway Man of the Match).