

Lewis and Harris League:

Ness 1 (0) Carloway 2 (2)

Domhnall Sheocaidh (73 pen.) Dan Crossley 7

Domhnall Mackay 21

At Ness

23.4.10

Ref.: Billy Macdonald

Gordon Craigie

Calum Moody Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Darren Mackinnon

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Murdo "Squeg" Macleod Donnie Macphail Kenny "Beag"

Maclennan Gordon "Tago" Macdonald

Dan Crossley Archie Macdonald

Subs. used : Seumas Macleod (Archie Macdonald) 65; Andrew "Tago" Maciver (Domhnall Mackay) 67; Ed Ansell (Dan Crossley) 90.

On a cold, windy evening in Ness, an inconsistent Carloway team eventually edged out a deserved victory over a battling, but ineffective Ness side. Donnie Macphail started in midfield, while Dan Crossley replaced Monday's hero, Kenny Dokus (knee injury) up front, alongside Archie Macdonald; Seumas Macleod dropped to the bench alongside Ed Ansell and Calum Mackay and a returning Andrew Maciver.

In any game at Ness, there always seems to be three participants: the home and away teams and the wind. Whoever harnesses it better, controls the game. Na Gormaich had the advantage of a strong south-easterly behind them as they took the game initially to a Ness side which defended well and competed hard in midfield but were non-existent in attack. Gochan and Tago were not marked tightly and constantly escaped their markers, while an all-running, all-tackling performance from the quick-fire Crossley caused Sheocaidh and his back line all sorts of problems. The opener was simplicity itself: a long clearance from Domhnall Mackay carried the length of the field and Crossley outpaced his marker into the box to lob the ball high over the advancing Gillies, then watch it drop neatly under the bar and home.

On 20 minutes the Blues had a strong claim for a penalty after Crossley went down, but moments later a Tago corner from Carloway's right carried to an unmarked Mackay at the back post who reverse headed the ball back across goal and into the top corner; "*a textbook header*", according to the scorer later. At this point Ness were losing their shape and the chances kept coming for the Blues: Archie Macdonald ran free on to a diagonal cross ball to head over an exposed Gillies but was unlucky to be ruled offside; then Mackay hit the top of the bar from another Tago corner. Crossley and Squeg both had shots charged down before Macdonald shot just over from a Gochan cross. The half ended without Ness creating a single clear chance.

However, with the wind behind them, the Niseachs started to exert more control, and pushed forward. Carloway seemed to be playing as if this was an away game in Europe: " *Right, we've got the goals: let's just keep them at bay* ". A stalemate developed. Then suddenly, on the hour, Ness had three quick opportunities to score: a retreating Mackay, on the edge of the box, headed the ball high backwards to Craigie, unaware that Craigie was advancing to collect the ball. It was dropping in until Calum Moody recovered well to beat a Ness forward to the ball and perform a spectacular overhead clearance off the line. The ball was whipped in from the left and Calum Tom miskicked another attempted clearance inches past his own right-hand post.

On 64 minutes a low shot from the left was blocked by Craigie, then spun out to a Ness striker on 12 metres centrally but his shot went straight up. A pattern soon developed, where both sides were beginning to cancel each other out. Then, on 73 minutes, on the left of a crowded box, a clumsy tackle by Squeg felled a Niseach and Sheocaidh coolly slotted the ball à la Giggs into Craigie's right-hand bottom corner. Gordon did a Heurlho Gomes, guessing correctly with outstretched arm, but it was way too well-taken to be saved; a beauty! The Blues did have two final chances to settle it: first, Kenny Beag shot narrowly past on 83 minutes, before Seumas Macleod was sent clear in the final minute. Gillies was out like a shot to make himself big, but Seumas slipped it round him neatly from about 16 metres- and round the post!

The Blues will be faintly unhappy with this performance. Despite the best efforts of the Ness defence, well-marshalled by Sheocaidh (probably their best performer on the night), na Gormaich created a multitude of chances in the first half; they had a grip of the midfield, ran well, and their forwards created oceans of space, with Dan Crossley, my Carloway Man of the Match, outstanding: running, pressurising, laying the ball off, tackling back. Also, apart from that 10-minute spell in the second half, their defence was largely untroubled; though the Ness midfield tackled hard and battled well, they continually lost their shape and they rarely threatened up front. How the green and blacks need a striker! Yet still the Blues could have ended up not winning. They were unable to kill a struggling opponent off, and for large spells the game simply seemed to drift along, uneventfully.