

Highland Amateur Cup Round 1:

**Ness 1 (0) Carloway 3 (0)**

*Lee Johnson 89*

*Donnie Macphail 56*

*Gordon "Tago" Macdonald 58*

*Kenny "Beag" MacIennan 84*

*At Ness*

*7.5.10*

*Ref.: Calum 'Chancy' Macleod*

*Gordon Craigie*

*Domhnall Mackay Andrew Maciver (capt.) Calum Moody*

*Darren Mackinnon Donnie Macphail Kenny "Beag" MacIennan Murdo "Squeg" Gordon "Tago" Macdonald*

*Dan Crossley Seumas Macleod*

*Subs.used: Archie Macdonald (Seumas Macleod) 71; Kevin "Gochan" Macleod (Dan Crossley) 77; Kenny Dokus (Donnie Macphail) 83*

*Yellow Card: Gordon Tago 85*

Summer had arrived in Ness: the weather was sunny and windless though nippy, as a much more purposeful Carloway side imposed themselves on a competitive and aggressive Ness team, which, however, as in the League game a couple of weeks ago, rarely troubled Craigie. Dan Crossley was available, so Kevin Macleod dropped to the bench, and the Blues continued with their preferred 3-5-2 formation.

After an uneventful opening, the chances began to appear for the Blues: Donnie Macphail shot over on 24 minutes, then Gordon Tago headed wide after good work from Kenny Beag, before a storming Calum Moody run set up Dan Crossley but his shot lacked power. On the half hour a corner on the left led to a frantic scramble in the Niseachs' box, which resulted in a Seumas Macleod shot which Sweeney palmed wide at full stretch. Next a Domhnall Mackay shot was deflected just over.

Domhnall Sheocaidh and Angie were defending stoutly and Kevin Graham was as combative as ever beside them and moving forward but nothing was happening for them up front, where Mackay, Pongo, and Calum Tom were as resolute as the Great Wall of China and pushing forward into their midfield, which in turn were having their most effective performance this season. The inimitable *louche* style of Donnie Macphail was counterpointed perfectly by the in-your-face aggression of Squeg, with Kenny Beag's style a subtle blend of both; the Ness midfield were unable to hold them and this led to a steady supply of diagonals to Mackinnon and Tago who got behind the wide back men too easily to cross.

Sheocaidh, Angie, and Graham were drawn apart to support, leaving gaps in the centre for Crossley and Macleod to exploit. A Macleod header hit the top of the bar on 40 minutes, then Sweeney flicked a Calum Tom shot past; from the corner, a stramash in the 6-metre box led to nothing, before Sweeney pushed a long shot on to the bar in injury-time.

The pattern was unchanged in the second half and finally na Gormaich achieved the breakthrough: a Mackinnon cross eventually broke out to Macphail on the edge of the box. He took one touch to control it, then hooked a low left-foot shot perfectly into Sweeney's bottom left-hand corner. The goalie had hardly dusted himself down before he was examining the ball in his net again: a rather weak award led to a Carloway free-kick on the right-hand side of the edge of the Ness box: Tago went across, did not hesitate, and with his left foot sent the sweetest of daisycutters hard round the wall into the other bottom corner of Sweeney's net.

Ness wobbled dangerously as the Blues surged: a Tago shot was blocked, before a superb Macphail released Macleod but he pulled his drive wide. On 74 minutes Sweeney somehow got his hands to a Tago header, before Kenny Beag made the the trip to Uist safe for na Gormaich with a crashing conversion 6 minutes from time as a Squeg free kick midway into the Ness half on the right came through to him about 10 metres out on the left.

In the last minute a Wright-style kick-out from Sweeney led to a charge into the Carloway box; Craigie came, but Johnson just managed to head-flick the ball over him. Calum Moody had to take over in goal from the injured Craigie, but despite an unprecedented 7 added minutes, Ness were unable to pressure the Carloway defence.

From a Carloway point of view, this was a job well-done. Craigie had very little to do but handle safely as the back-line were rock-solid; the midfield maintained their grip on proceedings throughout, with Macphail in particular (my Carloway Man of the Match) in his finest Tigana form, releasing his wide men - it's remarkable what Tago can do when he gets a steady supply - and flighting the balls perfectly for Crossley and Macleod.

For Ness, it was the same type of performance as the League game and led to a domino-type of strain on the Niseachs: the Blues' back men were under so little pressure, they supported their midfield in flooding the middle of the park which in turn pulled Ness's midfield apart and back; controlling the centre of the field allowed Carloway's midfield to supply wide and through the middle regularly, which simply meant that Sweeney and the centre of Ness's defence had too much to do.