

Coop Cup Round 1:

## **Carloway 3 (2) Lochs 3 (0)** (Carloway won 5-3 on penalties)

*Calum Moody 11*

*David Macmillan 58*

*Donnie Macphail 13, 90+1*

*Donald "Nomie" Macdonald 63*

*Roddie Morrison 82*

*At Cnoc a'Choilich.*

*14.5.10*

*Ref.: D.J.Maclean*

*Gordie Mackenzie*

*Ed Ansell Calum Moody (capt.) Darren Mackinnon*

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Seumas Macleod Donnie Macphail Murdo "Squeg" Macleod*

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver*

*Chris Macleod Dan Crossley*

*Subs.used: Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald (Dan Crossley) 63; Archie Macdonald (Seumas Macleod) 80.*

*Yellow Card: Donnie Macphail 57.*

A cold, sunny evening at Cnoc a' Choilich, marred slightly by a brisk southerly wind, provided an attractive setting for the first Blues-Maroons collision of 2010. A wedding at Breasclete (some people have their priorities all wrong!) necessitated changes in the established Carloway line-up, with Domhnall Mackay, Andrew Maciver, Kenny Beag, and Donald Chisholm all unavailable, and Gordon Craigie still recuperating from his chest injury sustained at Ness. Hence, Gordie Mackenzie had his first start of 2010, with Ed Ansell coming off the bench to partner Calum Tom and a withdrawn left Darren Mackinnon in the back three, while Seumas Macleod dropped back into Mackinnon's usual slot at right midfield and allowed his brother Chris to join Dan Crossley up front. Kenny Dokus was still not deemed fully ready to be risked and remained as substitute, alongside Archie Uibhisteach and the third Macleod, Calum. The absence of David Martin in maroon doubtless cheered the Blues.

Lochs remain the mark, to which all other island sides aspire. Others judge your quality according to how you perform against them. Even to lose to them is no disgrace; it's how you lose. The joy - and pain - of last season's Moldova Cup victory at Cameron Terrace, two close League defeats, and two total maulings in other competitions, continue to resonate in Carloway and, no doubt, inspired a wind-assisted Carloway to open confidently, clearing decisively when under pressure, yet retaining possession when possible and building patiently from the back.

As in the HAC against Ness, the back three forced play forward - dangerous against free-running opponents of this calibre - to keep Nomie and Lava far from goal and create a congested midfield to stifle the imagination of Andy

Murray and drive of David Macmillan, while the relentless chasing and harrying of the Macleod brothers and Crossley contrived to occupy the attention of the Mackenzies. A Mackinnon run immediately set up Crossley who laid off fast to Tago but he couldn't quite finish. A Morrison flick did release Nomie on the right: he ghosted inside expertly but his shot was read by Gordie.

Then an early game-changer for na Gormaich: a treacherous inswinging corner from Tago on the right deceived Houston and was forced home by Calum Moody on a crowded goal-line at the far post. Minutes later it was two as Gochan headed in to Crossley on the edge of the box centrally; he laid it back to Macphail who sent a low right-foot peach from 20 metres into Houston's far-right corner. The Blues were hot at this point: Cameron Houston touched over a Calum Moody free-kick from 30 metres on 22 minutes, then a Tago free-kick 22 metres out to the right came back off his right-hand post, but the killer third eluded them, and just before half-time Lava almost threw Lochs a lifeline when he burst into the box on the left but was crowded by Mackinnon and overran the ball to Mackenzie.

It seems the teams exchanged shirts at the interval and replayed the first half. The initiative was now with Lochs and they retained it for most of the half. The exhaustive running of the Blues' front men waned and Lochs' defence were now pushing and spreading, causing their opposite numbers to retreat, then na Gormaich's midfield to fall back and stretch to cover. Murray gained space and Nomie drifted left and wide off Ansell to await the golden ball from Murray or Macmillan.

Immediately, Nomie was free down the left, beat two to cut inside, but was denied by Mackenzie. An exquisite quick-fire move sent Andy Murray through into the left of the box but an exposed Gordie made himself big and Andy pulled his shot beyond the far post. Then, on 58 minutes, Game On! A free-kick 22 metres out to Lochs, slightly to the right of the Carlway box and Macmillan sent the sweetest of dead balls round the wall and just inside the left-hand post. The Blues survived a Calum Tom "handball" claim in the box and another near miss by Nomie before a through ball found the same striker peeling off Ansell to advance to side-foot past the helpless Mackenzie.

The Blues were struggling now to contain the men from Leurbost: on 68 minutes a crossfield move left Lava to strike the bar; then on 82 minutes Morrison's glancing header on a cross from the right appeared to have given Lochs victory. On 87 minutes Lava had a chance to seal the tie as he met a cross from the right with a free header about 8 metres out, but Mackenzie suddenly became Gordon Banks and somehow clawed the ball over the bar. As D.J. checked his watch, Gochan broke down the right, then beat his marker on the goal-line to run in and cross along the 6 metre line, for Macphail to storm in and carry the ball into the net.

At the penalties, na Gormaich scored first; Lochs sent their opener against the post. From then on, both sides held their nerve, till special pressure was placed on Tago to convert Carloway's fifth and achieve their first victory in the Coop Cup since 2002. Fortunately for the men in blue, an expert dead-ball man like him is the man you desire at such a moment. Hopefully there were plenty of scouts present to see the talent on display at this island spectacle: Carloway strong in the first half; Lochs, resilient under pressure; positions reversed in the second half. Carloway could have had it won after half an hour; Lochs should have won it in the second half. Victory in Lochs' hands; snatched away in sudden death by Carloway - two cracking goals from Donnie Macphail and David Macmillan.

Lochs were subdued in the opening half, but Nomie was transformed into outstanding Wiltord form in the second half when he moved left: twisting, elusive, deadly, though David Macmillan probably eclipsed him - and his more creative partner, Andy Murray - as Lochs' Man of the Match with his battling contribution throughout.

When Carloway play to their strengths against Lochs - or Back - they tend to fare better, than if they try to mark them out. With Lochs this is usually impossible because of the spread of talent. A central thread of gold underlay this victory: Gordie sound in goal; Calum Tom (my Carloway Man of the Match a hair ahead of Donnie) a tower of strength in central defence; Donnie Macphail in finest Ardiles form, and Dan Crossley up front running himself - and Peter Mackenzie - to a standstill over an hour.