

Jock Stein Cup Round 2:

## Carloway 3 (0) Harris 2 (0)

Kenny "Beag" MacIennan 51, 55 Kieron Mulhearn 75  
Gordon "Tago" Macdonald 69 James Maclean 90+2

At Cnoc a'Choilich.

31.5.10

Ref.: D.J.Maclean

Gordon Craigie

Domhnall Mackay Andrew "Tago" Maciver (capt.) Calum Moody  
Darren Mackinnon Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Kenny "Beag" MacIennan Murdo "Squegg"  
Macleod Andrew "Tago" Maciver  
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Seumas Macleod

Subs. used: Donnie Macphail (Calum Moody) 45; Dan Crossley (Kenny Dokus) 57; Ed Ansell (Murdo Squegg) 78.

A confident Carloway took the field in this cup-tie on the back of seven victories in their first ten games and only one defeat, and that the rather undeserved outcome of a sparkling last-minute strike from Scott Maciver at Goathill in the ABC Cup. The defence has been stolid, conceding only 12, and though the Goals Scored column reads healthy (with 27 for), the ratio of goals scored to chances created has caused concern, plus an inability to force the issue when on top. Peter Dokus fine-tuned the engine once again, with Seumas Macleod starting up front with Dokus, and Gochan slotting in behind in right midfield, while Donnie Macphail and Archie Macdonald joined Dan Crossley, Ed Ansell, and DI MacIennan on the bench.

A fortnight ago these two sides bored each other to death in Tarbert in a game that should have ended 0-0, and would have, if the Harris defence hadn't thought Murdo Macaulay had blown the final whistle after 85 minutes. The opening half here had similarities to that contest, with neither side really able to establish superiority and chances few. On 14 minutes Darren Mackinnon broke on the right and his long diagonal cross from midfield just eluded a clean header from Tago. The Hearachs replied on 20 minutes from a free-kick on the right, 25 metres out, which led to an extended scramble in the Blues' box; na Gormaich couldn't get the ball away; Harris were unable to get a clear strike, and the chance was lost.

As at Rally Park, a stalemate developed, with defences secure, goalkeepers untroubled, and flooded, combative midfields. Though not as tight as at Tarbert, room for manoeuvre was limited, the Blues' back three resorted to their usual patient build-up when not under pressure, Tago and Gochan dropped back as required, and Darren Mackinnon was alert to break fast right as opportunity arose. Suddenly, out of nowhere, on 37 minutes, Kenny Dokus received a ball from midfield, moving in centrally about 20 metres out. He let it bounce once then sent in a half-volley which twanged Beaton's crossbar like a bow-string, bounced down and thwacked the bemused goalkeeper, and then headed goalwards. David Beaton showed first-class reflexes to dive back and throw himself on the ball.

The second half continued in similar vein. Carloway edged possession while both sides laboured relentlessly to establish a grip on midfield and orchestrate attack. Then, in the space of four minutes, the Blues did something-twice-which neither side seemed likely to do-scored! Donnie Macphail, breaking from the halfway line centrally, sent a glorious Charlie Gallagher-style defence-splitter left over a retreating backline to an inrushing Kenny Beag, who touched it past the advancing keeper. Then Gochan rode a fierce challenge on the right to make the goal-line and float a hanging cross over Beaton to Kenny Beag at the far goalpost to head home.

Now chances appeared for na Gormaich as the men from Harris searched for a way back. On 67 minutes a Macphail free-kick broke to Macleod in front of goal but he miscued. Then a searching diagonal Squeg cross from the right was nodded home by Tago. On 73 minutes Dan Crossley headflicked a Mackinnon cross on to the top of the crossbar and over.

The Hearachs were wobbling but just as the Blues' thoughts started to turn to events at Col Uarach, they received a nasty shock: the ball came in low from the left to a totally unmarked Mulhearn 10 metres out in front of goal. Thank you very much, he said. Carloway now struggled to re-establish their grip though Harris presented little danger until James Maclean managed to force the ball home on the right deep in injury-time, but by then it was too late to make a difference.

It is hard to believe five goals were eventually scored in this game, so few chances were created in the 90 minutes. The Blues edged proceedings, with more chances created, and, until the last 15 minutes, their defence seemed underemployed. Harris, in turn, coped adequately at the back for 50 minutes and Beaton was his usual safe-as-houses self (why is he not in the Lewis & Harris squad?); a game-changing ball like Macphail's would have shredded any defence, but, up front, they were largely invisible; maybe the early injury to John Sutton affected their gameplan.

As usual, the Blues' midfield worked tirelessly to get and keep things going, with Kenny Beag, Squeg, and Darren Mackinnon particularly effective, and Seumas Macleod never stopped chasing. They never stopped coming forward but the touch repeatedly eluded them. However, as Sir Alex of Govan himself said, a team which is not playing as well as it thinks it can but still keeps winning is definitely Championship material. On the evidence of their last three games, maybe this is Carloway's year!