

Highland Amateur Cup Round 2:

## North Uist Utd. 0 (0) Carloway 6 (2)

*Gordon "Tago" Macdonald 24  
Dan Crossley 29  
Andrew "Tago" Maciver 57  
Seumas Macleod 58  
Archie Macdonald 69, 90*

*At Schoolground, Paibeil  
Saturday, 5.6.10  
Ref.:D.A.MacInnes*

*Gordon Craigie  
Calum Moody Andrew Maciver (capt.) Domhnall Mackay  
Darren Mackinnon Seumas Macleod Donnie Macphail Murdo "Squeg" Macleod Gordon  
"Gochan" Macdonald  
Dan Crossley Kenny MacIennan*

*Subs.used: Ed Ansell (Murdo Squegg) 29; Archie Macdonald (Dan Crossley) 66; Kevin  
"Gochan" Macleod (Darren Mackinnon) 78*

Optimism was high and motivation rampant as the storm troops in blue headed south with an ebullient squad (minus the unavailable Dokus) to continue their surge towards the Victoria Ground in Dingwall next August. Success in any level of football lies in maintaining a squad's inner strength, whilst avoiding in-fighting and injury; this fosters *esprit-de-corps* (weighed in tons – or Magner's - in this group) and leads to silverware.

The Blues were clearly totally focussed from kick-off to rework their groundbreaking victory over na h-Uibhistich four years and a fortnight before to the south in Lionacleit when they overcame a desultory first half performance and deficit, caused by a Dawie Maccorquodale cracker, to edge a deserved victory, thanks to Chris Macleod and Scott Macaulay. "Stats" declared that this was the first time a Carloway eleven had won two consecutive rounds in the HAC and their first-ever victory outwith Lewis and Harris. The years roar past. Only Gordon Craigie, Domhnall Mackay, Squegg, and Gochan survived from Domhnall Beag's team that day - even "Buck" Macaskill, who refereed that day, has gone - but Peter Dokus's finely-tuned outfit were unconcerned by history and remorselessly dedicated to subduing a depleted United, missing five regulars, including their first-choice goalkeeper.

A beautiful, warm morning witnessed an inconclusive opening 20 minutes, before na Gormaich, assisted by a fair southerly breeze, ramped up from first to fourth gear, to produce a grindingly aggressive display on a poor surface of bumpy, coarse grass - no Wembley this: on 9 minutes a deadly inswinging Tago corner from the right was won by Calum Tom, but his ricocheting header was booted off the line; then Moody set up Crossley down the line and his sweeping low cross was fumbled off for a corner by John Docherty under pressure. Already Ruaraidh Macleod and his eager Uibhisteach midfield were struggling to combat the Carloway surge and the early loss of Calum "Shin" Macdonald, their Director of Operations, with a back injury, made things

critical.

Tago set up Crossley again down the right but there were no takers for his wicked cutback; then Kenny Beag sidefooted past from 14 metres, before the window opened: from central midfield, on the halfway line, Pongo supplied a classic Frank de Boer ball to Macleod running free left; a Cruyff backturn lost his marker and his stinging shot rasped off an alert Docherty across goal, came back off Kenny Beag's midriff, and Tago reacted like Nadal to swat the ball in by head. Moments later Seumas was blocked before another incisive Tago corner from the right was met by Calum Tom and Crossley converted on the line. On half-time Macleod freed Kenny Beag but he flicked over, and the sweetest of Macphail free-kicks, a la Luis Suarez, 30 metres out on the right, caused panic in the box before it eventually fell to Ansell but his strike was scrambled away.

Because they were unable to pressure the Blues' defence, there was no way back for na Paibeilich; holding seemed to be the imperative, apart from Macleod who was operating as a one-man SAS force in central midfield. The Carloway back-line were able to pass the ball around, and around him, and build forward, and Mackay adopted a Beckenbauer role, while Pongo and Calum Tom pushed; Ed Ansell, normally thought of as a defender, metamorphosed into Xavi.

The game was over on 57-58 minutes: Pongo won the ball on the halfway line centrally, moved forward, saw the keeper a couple of metres off the line, and reprised his de Boer feat to Macleod by lobbing the ball over Docherty's head into the top right of the keeper's goal. A peach! When Seumas Macleod converted on the right from 20 metres, it really signalled, "*Cry havoc, and release the dogs of war!*"

As the Uibhistich wilted, every Blue wanted a goal - which, of course, created openings at the back. A ball from the left fell to Macleod and from 22 metres he sent North Uist's best chance of the game just over Craigie's bar. A forward just failed to connect with a Moody deflection off a free-kick on the right before Pongo sent Macleod free to cut back for Macdonald to convert. Archie Macdonald raced free again to chip the keeper but went wide before Seumas once more was free on the right to sweep low for the uncontainable Calum Tom to win, cut back to Macdonald, and for Archie to drive home.

In 2006 Carloway scraped through; in 2010 they strolled to victory. Na Gormaich have improved immeasurably since then, mainly due to Peter Dokus's and Kevin Anderson's insightful management, yet one must wonder about the game to the south: over "coffee" in the Lochmaddy Hotel apres-match, United's sponsor was asked if the local young men were no longer interested in playing. His reply was salutary: "There are no young men". Young players were present, and Joe 90, their bespectacled 14-year-old sub deserves recognition along with Ruaraidh Macleod, their combative animateur in midfield, but after the opening quarter - the Birmingham City-running 20 minutes - this ended up a fine-tuning exercise for na Gormaich before their three-week confrontation with those so-serious men on the east,

the children of Dano.

Moody, Pongo, and Mackay (especially Domhnall, who was awesome in the second half - my Man of the Match) emanated confidence like a force-field, and Crossley's, Seumas', and Gochan's pace and selfless runs stretched and tormented the backline, setting up the Gerd Muller playalike in the middle, the ex-lochdar Saint, to convert. I hope Golspie Stafford are up for it!