

Jock Stein Cup SF:

## Carloway 1 (0) Back 3 (3)

*Calum Moody 75*

*Chris Adams 2, 27*

*Murray Macleod 40*

14.06.10

*At Cnoc a'Choilich*

*Ref.: A.I.Macleod*

*Gordon Craigie*

*Calum Moody Andrew Maciver (capt.) Darren Mackinnon*

*Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod Seumas Macleod Donnie Macphail Murdo 'Squegg' Macleod  
Benn Esslemont*

*Dan Crossley Kenny 'Beag' MacIennan*

*Subs.: Kenny 'Dokus' Macdonald (Donnie Macphail) 45; Domhnall Mackay (Ben Esslemont) 63.*

Part 2 of 3 and a swift chance for revenge for the Blues, after last week's disappointing defeat at Col Uarach. Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out like that, as, in a torrid first half, after an initial flurry, they were comprehensively outgunned by a fast-moving, efficient Back side. They did recover well in the second half, edging possession and creating the bulk of the chances, but whether the Bacachs were forced back or decided to sit back on a 3-goal cushion, depends on which team you support.

The portents did not favour Carloway: the talismanic Tago was unavailable on the left, while Dokus and Domhnall Mackay were carrying injuries and could not be risked for 90 minutes. On the plus side, Gochan and Kenny Beag declared themselves available, and were joined by debutant, ex-Aboyne and Montrose left midfielder, Benn Esslemont.

Alan Iain had hardly taken the whistle from his mouth when Back were ahead: a long ball from central midfield was just beating Pongo and Mackinnon. Mackinnon had to let it bounce, but it then swirled high over him as he turned, and Chris Adams forced his way past him to sidefoot past Craigie's right from 14 metres. The goal's suddenness caused joy (and misery) to take a moment to register, though na Gormaich didn't let it subdue them at first, and on 11 minutes almost equalised: a high, swinging cross from the right was too deep for Ali Tolsta and Kenny Beag met it 10 metres out, slightly to the left. His header looped over the helpless keeper and bounced back off the bar, before being booted clear. It was to be Carloway's only real opportunity of the half as Back closed shop at the back and asserted control in midfield.

Carloway could not find a way forward against a side that were consistently faster to the ball, plus the pace and elusiveness of Adams and Fraser Macleod were running sores up front, pinning the back line back. On 27 minutes Macleod sprinted free on the right on to a diagonal ball from midfield, then cut back low and hard for the arriving Adams to beat a defender and crack it first-time high into the net. A beauty! On 33 minutes Macleod was released again, and moving into the box, sent a low right-foot shot to Craigie's right, but the keeper parried it brilliantly with his right hand, then

recovered superbly to beat away the follow-up from the predatory Adams.

The Blues' luck finally ran out on 40 minutes when the irrepressible Macleod rode a daunting tackle on the right to slip the ball square to an unmarked Murray Macleod 10 metres out to pick his spot. The half-time whistle couldn't come soon enough for na Gormaich.

Donnie Macphail was sacrificed at half-time, Kenny Beag dropped back, and Dokus joined Crossley, but Carloway's nightmare wasn't yet over, as, immediately, Fraser Macleod's pace once more left him free on the right to reprise his assist at the third goal, this time for Adams arriving at speed on the left, but Craigie shot out to spread right and block magnificently as Adams tried to wrongfoot him by sidefooting to his left. Moments later, Back's anchor, Ross Hall, almost did the Blues a favour by attempting to talk the referee into sending him off, complaining about an earlier unawarded "foul".

An Esslemont crossball from the left was misjudged by Tolsta but headed on for a corner, before Benn gave way to Calum Moody moving forward to allow Domhnall Mackay to enter the fray at the back. This gave the Blues solidity at the back, and this was furthered by the disappearance of Fraser Macleod with a thigh strain. Boy, were the men in blue glad to see the back of him! They tried to force things, but had to wait till 75 minutes for a result: a Pongo corner on the right was met 8 metres out by Calum Tom, by now playing all over the field, and his crashing header gave Ali Tosta no chance high to his left. However, they remained unable to pressurise a Back side, as comfortable in defence as Mourinho's Internazionale and nothing further threatened.

There was no shame in this defeat. On the night, na Gormaich were simply confronted by a faster, more tactically secure side, whose defence - brilliantly marshalled by Ross Hall - cleared the ball more efficiently to a midfield who won the first half battle for control and whose forward passing continually tested an unprotected Carloway back three, over the top, or diagonally between, to supply two strikers who used the open space and pace to maximum effect.

Fraser Macleod, my Man of the Match, was electric! It was to Carloway's credit they were not blown away by this and managed to make a fist of it in the second half; in part, Craigie must be congratulated for this, with two world-class saves (one a double). No wonder Fabio Capello was on the phone to find out if he was English! But, partly, it was insight, and some tough choices, by Peter Dokus. It was a brave decision to take off playmaker Macphail, but Kenny Beag moving back stabilised the midfield, while Domhnall's presence strengthened the team, allowing Calum Tom (my Carloway Man of the Match) to roam free, and this all contributed to a face-saving final 25 minutes for Carloway.