

Lewis and Harris League:

Back 3 (0) Carloway 2 (0)

*Ali 'Tolsta' Maciver 77 Kenny 'Dokus' Macdonald 53
Michael Mackay 79 Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod 90+3
Fraser Macleod 90+6*

At Coll.

23.7.10

Ref.: Euan Macaskill.

Gordon Mackenzie

*Andrew 'Tago' Maciver (capt.) Domhnall Mackay Calum Tom Moody Donald MacIennan
Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod Dan Crossley Benn Esslemont;
Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod Seumas Macleod Gordon 'Tago' Macdonald*

Subs. used: Kenny 'Dokus' Macdonald (Donald MacIennan) 43; Archie Macdonald (Seumas Macleod) 65.

Yellow Cards: Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod.

Ouch! It don't half hurt! Superficially, this match may have been reminiscent of the defeat at Barvas only 18 days before, last minute winner and all that, but, really, one significant difference rendered it more akin to the demoralising League defeat at Leurbost last August: the Blues played excellently, but, once again, having made the opposition look like a bunch of piano-shifters for most of the first half and having battled equally with them for the remainder, they failed to capitalise on an earned advantage and were latterly punished for a couple of simple errors at the back.

For most of the game, the goalkeeper was untroubled; the defence were stalwart; the midfield combative and creative, but too little happened in the last third, and eventually the Bacachs managed to force themselves into the contest, and, thanks to a stroke of luck and a startling contribution from late substitute, Fraser Macleod, the points disappeared, from under the Blues' noses.

After his match-winning contribution at Garrabost, Gordie Mackenzie continued in goal while Dan Crossley returned in central midfield and replaced the unavailable Kenny MacIennan. Carloway hit the ground running and established an early momentum, building carefully from the back through midfield as Tago, Gochan, and Seumas Macleod continually shape-shifted up front to receive and find an opening against a well-marshalled Back defence who kept Tohan generally protected, and, in turn, generated swift and dangerous counter-attacks, mainly wide.

22 minutes came before the first half-chance when Esslemont released the free-running Gochan through the middle, but he had slipped behind his marker a step too early; then a Seumas Macleod turn and shot was blocked in a crowded area. Back broke down the right suddenly and a rocket cut-back whizzed across na Gormaich's 6-metre line invitingly but without takers.

In a sense, both defences were too good for both attacks: Carloway tended to drive through the middle where Ross Hall and David Ox were strong; Back came by the wings but cut-backs were unmet and blocked by Mackay and Moody; Crossley and Martin Maclean were in each other's faces, while Squeg and Esslemont blocked, harried, and carried. The best chances came on 42 minutes when a quicksilver Back move down the left and cross was whipped on high from the edge of the box and Mackenzie tipped it brilliantly over the bar. The resultant corner from the left was cleared high off the line amidst a ruck and DI MacIennan was left injured in the goalmouth.

With DI's demise, Benn Esslemont dropped back to the Chivu role; firepower up front was reduced immediately as a prime supplier, Tago, more at home as a Lothar Emmerich than a Billy Stevenson, fell back to secure left midfield, Seumas Macleod retreated wider, and Gochan and Dokus had to hover, expectantly. As pressure decreased on the Back defence, Carloway, astonishingly, took the lead, with a breathtakingly, beautiful goal: an enormous free-kick from the right halfway line was nodded left by Calum Moody in a crowded Back area and a lurking Dokus hooked it exquisitely with his right foot high past Tohan's right hand.

At this point, Carloway's star had risen: ahead, against a strangely subdued Back team, who somehow seemed to find it difficult to make headway against a resolute, if unincisive opposition, who ran at them confidently but were unthreatening. The introduction of Archie Macdonald gave new impetus: on 66 minutes, a Pongo break down the right led to a Dokus shot being blocked; a corner on the left was headed just over by Calum Tom, then Gochan released Tago and his sweeping cross was met by Macdonald's head 8 metres out but a Back boot somehow diverted the ball over the bar.

Two minutes later, however, Dame Fortune really turned her back on the Blues: on the left halfway line Ali Maciver hoisted a free-kick goalwards; Mackenzie came for it unchallenged, seemed to have it high, then the ball slipped backwards out of his hands, and over the line. A stunned Carloway had still not recovered when a disputed free-kick freed Fraser Macleod on the right; he eluded his marker on the goal-line and his bullet cross was forced in off the keeper by an unmarked Mackay on the left 6-metre line.

It was a sensational turnaround and Carloway now threw caution to the wind with Pongo surging forward on the right and Calum Moody donning his Fabulous Four outfit to become attacking midfielder/ striker and all-round inspiration to the Blues. But Back, however, kept the door firmly bolted till deep into injury-time, when a Carloway free-kick was headed down and back by Moody (who else?) to Murdo Squeg, who drove an unstoppable right-foot shot low inside Tohan's right-hand post. Na Gormaich appeared to have saved a point but with practically the last kick of the game, Back retaliated: a clearance was trapped by Domhnall Mackay, by now the Blues' sole defender, midway within his own half, but the ball spun away behind him and Roadrunner Macleod was on to it in a flash and from the right corner of the box sent a perfect low screamer across Mackenzie into the far corner.

The usual remarks were made afterwards: "We were robbed!"; "Daylight robbery"; "We deserved to win". However, the notion of desert in sport does not compute; you either win or you don't. In football, there are two axioms: it's

the team that scores the goals that wins, and despite eventually grabbing two here, Carloway, at times, find that difficult, especially against resilient opponents like Back.

Also, a game isn't over till the final whistle blows, even if it ends up lasting 101minutes! Carloway edged most of this game, regarding possession and movement, with steady performances from the back line, especially Mr. Versatility himself, Calum Moody; Crossley, Squeg, and Esslemont blocked and drove forward, while the front men ran tirelessly. Yet, for all that, the Bacachs were only seriously troubled on a handful of occasions, with Tohan in action only occasionally and Ross Hall still finding ample time to supply his trademark diagonals and come forward. Nevertheless, Back, like Carloway, only came close sporadically, with Michael Mackay well-contained, until the insightful late introduction of Macleod, whose speed really stretched tired legs at the back.

Back Man of the Match: Fraser Macleod (only on for a short period, but really drastically changed the outcome of this match).

Carloway Man of the Match: Calum Moody.