

Lewis and Harris League:

## **Carloway 2 (2) Lochs 5 (3)**

Archie Macdonald 22

Peter Mackenzie 12

Dan Crossley 38

David Martin 32

Don 'Lava' Macleod 40, 68

David Macmillan 50

*At Cnoc a'Choilich.*

28.7.10

Ref.: Calum Mackinnon

Gordon Craigie

Ed Ansell Andrew 'Tago' Maciver (capt.) Domhnall Mackay Calum Moody  
Seumas Macleod Murdo 'Squegg' Macleod Benn Esslemont Gordon 'Tago' Macdonald  
Archie Macdonald Kevin Anderson

*Subs.used: Dan Crossley (Seumas Macleod) 18; Kenny 'Dokus' Macdonald (Benn Esslemont) 64; Gordie Mackenzie (Ed Ansell) 81.*

*Yellow Cards: Calum Moody 66; Domhnall Mackay 77.*

These sides last collided on 14th May on Coop business, on a cold, sunny evening at Cnoc a'Choilich, when a weakened Carloway side gave, arguably, their best display of the season to match perennial finalists, Lochs, in normal time, before edging home on penalties. Tonight, "the best display of the season" attribute was infinitely more apt applied to their opponents, as a scintillating, all-action Lochs at times threatened to surpass the two maulings the Blues suffered against the men from Leurbost last season.

Fatigued? Past their best? Who's kidding who? For most of the 90 minutes, a free-flowing Lochs out-thought, out-ran, and out-paced a bemused Blues' side, who, incredibly, hit back twice to stay in contention till half-time, before eventually sinking under the onslaught. Gordon Craigie returned in goal, but absentees included DI Maclennan (tendon), Kenny Beag (work), and the unavailable Gochan and Darren Mackinnon. Archie Uibhisteach started up front, alongside the returning stalwart, Kevin Anderson, but Dan Crossley was on the bench because of his efforts the night before.

In May, the Blues' tactics dominated the first half: clear the lines decisively under pressure, yet retain possession when possible and build from the back; force play forward 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 Chris and Seumas Macleod and Dan Crossley kept the Mackenzies busy up front. The absence of David Martin and an early breakthrough assisted this strategy.

Such good fortune, however, eluded na Gormaich tonight: an early break on

the left did see Esslemont send a glorious cross-field diagonal to Macdonald racing to the bye-line, but his early cutback escaped Anderson rushing in, 6 metres out on the left. Unfortunately for the Blues, a Hungarian one-touch approach from Lochs soon confounded their best intentions: the instant lay-off and run; the interchange of running patterns from Macmillan, Murray, and Robert Mackenzie; the "dead" man running by Martin, Nomie, and Lava to attract markers into "false" positions to create open spaces for colleagues to exploit; the killer 25-metre diagonal to pick out the unmarked attacker, to shoot or cross for Martin, Robert or Peter Mackenzie coming through centrally or right, or Lava and Nomie left.

Man-marking was ineffective: Martin repeatedly dragged Ed Ansell out; Lava or Nomie ghosted left into space; the Carloway big men gravitated to their right to cover; Peter Mackenzie might have had a hat-trick by the twelfth minute. On 6 minutes he miscued, then pulled a Lava cutback wide left, before a Carlos Alberto-type finish off another Lava cross buried the ball deep to Craigie's right. A minute later Robert Mackenzie cracked the bar from 25 metres before Craigie brilliantly blocked another Peter Mackenzie drive.

Carloway were struggling but then, unexpectedly, equalised: an enormous Pongo free-kick from the left halfway line was miscued by Black who displayed all the control of Karman Akmal to send an attempted fisted clearance slicing back over his head towards goal, before clawing it away. Corners followed and the still-shaken keeper, under pressure from Pongo, only pushed the ball out, and Archie Macdonald headed the ball home from 8 metres. The Blues pushed briefly, before Lava once more was freed on the left, to cut-back for an unmarked Martin in the centre to convert. A minute later Squeg cleared a Lava header off the line before, amazingly, Carloway levelled again: a peach of an Esslemont free-kick on the left, midway within the Lochs' half, was met 10 metres out centrally by an unmarked Crossley to head home.

Two minutes later the spirit level sank once more: a delicately-chipped free-kick 22 metres out was met by an unmarked Lava on the left and from 12 metres out, on the extreme edge of the box, he sent an exquisitely-flighted header wide round Craigie and in off the far post.

A class-strike from David Macmillan on 50 minutes secured the points: a Mackay cruncher on Nomie 22 metres out led to a beautiful curler over the wall inside the right-hand post. Sweat, power, and running simply could not match control, subtlety, and movement, and Carloway were in danger of being swamped; a hunger for the ball, incisive tackling, and pace drove Lochs forward.

On 58 minutes another superlative tip-over by Craigie denied Robert Mackenzie from 22 metres; on 63 minutes Craigie blocked from a corner and Lava sent the rebound over. Two minutes later Craigie rescued the Blues

again low to his right, before Lava wrapped up the scoring. Pongo miscued a headed clearance; the ball fell neatly for Macleod drifting behind his marker, on the edge of the area; he allowed the keeper to come to him, let the ball bounce once, then lifted it neatly over him into the empty net. A disintegrating Carloway could now not prevent the chances flowing for the Maroons, but, for once, the gods were kind to the Blues as Craigie repeatedly emulated Samir Handanovic with a series of world-class saves, and along with some slack finishing, and good luck, helped the Blues survive without further damage.

A vintage performance from the champions left na Gormaich reeling. Interchange of position and unselfish running off the ball distracted and confused markers to create openings for angled passes to wide men feeding emerging runners, freed of markers, right, left, or centre. It was mesmeric at times, the best footballing display at Cnoc a'Choilich for a long time. Joachim Low obviously made Germany watch a video of Lochs at their best before playing England and Argentina; a pity Capello didn't watch the same video, as Ozil, Klose, and Schweinsteiger clearly modelled their approach on Nomie, Lava, and Macmillan, although Lahm lacks the firepower of Peter Mackenzie, who shaded his namesake, Robert, as Man of the Match.

Carloway competed hard but how do you contain shadows who are eternally shifting, making man-marking dangerous? As the defence and midfield were tugged and stretched, the angled pass dissected their square back line with ease, and pace and movement made zonal marking even harder, rendering it impossible for the Blues to play their normal game: building from the back was not an option, the midfield fragmented, and the strikers were isolated.

Lochs Man of the Match: Peter Mackenzie.

Carloway Man of the Match: Gordon Craigie.