

Coop Cup Semi-Final:

Carloway 2 (0) Ness 0 (0)

Calum Moody 60

Kenny MacLennan 85

At Cnoc a'Choilich

Ref.: Robert Mackay

11.8.10

Gordon Craigie

Graeme 'Windy' Miller Calum Moody (capt.) Domhnall Mackay Benn Esslemont

Donnie Macphail Kenny 'Beag' MacLennan Murdo 'Squegg' Macleod Gordon

'Tago'Macdonald

Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod Archie Macdonald

Subs. used: Dan Crossley (Kevin Macleod) 81; Seumas Macleod (Archie Macdonald) 89.

Well, the Blues finally got there, despite the Niseachs' best efforts to break a 17-game winless streak against the men from the West Side, which stretches back to 2005. Carloway continued in their combative, all-action mode from the Harris game, and the first hour, until Calum Moody's bundled opener, consisted of sustained Blues' pressure, countless attempts on goal, glaring misses, bad luck, sound physical defence, and very careful goalkeeping.

Indeed, the men of Ness remained in this contest right to the death and might well have taken it to penalties but for an unlucky penalty denial against Angie Campbell and a missed opportunity by Lee Johnson near the end. There were two enforced changes for Carloway, with Calum Moody starting for Pongo (work) and Kevin Macleod replacing Kenny Dokus (broken wrist).

Na Gormaich's opening rush unsettled Ness right away: immediately Kenny Beag was put through but Sweeney did well to block; then Calum Moody was denied as he moved on to a glorious defence-splitter from Macphail. Tago controlled an awkward ball from the right, then fired just over from the edge of the box, before sending a diagonal low cross behind the defence on 23 minutes for Archie Macdonald to convert but he'd stepped forward a moment too soon. Moments later, a saving Cheocaidh tackle diverted a Moody shot past; then Sweeney had to move smartly to grab a nasty Tago cross after a surging run down the left. Frantic stuff!

Carloway's full-on commitment (spread, running, pace) no doubt an attempt to continue a desired catharsis of the Aths' débacle, was turning Ness, apart from lone striker, Macleod, into a team of defenders, with playmakers, Campbell and Cheocaidh, for the first half-hour, too intent on blocking Kenny Beag and Squegg to be creative. Then, out of the blue, an exquisite through ball from Campbell found ex-Blue Calum Macleod in space, behind the midfield and running at the defence; when Craigie took a pace or two forward,

he tried an up-and-under from 24 metres but it dipped a couple of metres over the bar. On 37 minutes once more Archie Uibhisteach had the ball in the net but again over-anticipated a fraction, and the half ended with an inch-perfect diagonal Esslemont cross from the left picking out the running Macphail, who slipped on the edge of the box.

The second half continued at cup-tie pace, although a slight desperation soon became evident in Carloway's approach, allowing the odd opening at last to appear for Ness, as they tried to force their way forward. Right away an Esslemont shot tested Sweeney, then a wicked free-kick from Gochan went close. Donnie Macphail shot over, well-placed, before the breakthrough materialised: a difficult Tago corner from the right flew across the Ness 6-metre line and the ubiquitous Moody forced it home, directly in front of goal.

Immediately, Tago almost made it two from 20 metres but his shot just cleared the bar. Ness now decided to go for it and battle was truly joined in midfield, but this in turn created more openings at the back for Carloway. On 65 minutes Macdonald broke clear on the right and sent a perfect diagonal behind the back-line to Tago running free in on goal centrally but he could not control the ball and it spun away from him. Two minutes later Calum Moody used the strengthening nor-westerly to send a free-kick from within his own half zooming in high on Sweeney but he flicked it away for yet another corner.

On 73 minutes the keeper had to repeat this feat from a Squegg free-kick 25 metres out on the right, as the swirling, gusty wind blew it in on him. From the corner, Captain Courageous again made contact, this time with his head, but the ball came back off Sweeney's bar on the right; Moody met the rebound and again it came back to him off the bar 8 metres out, but his right-foot shot went just past the post.

Then a heart-stopping moment for na Gormaich as Angie Campbell ghosted in behind Domhnall Mackay and on to a through ball from the centre. The two of them wrestled their way into the box, and, as the Niseachs made strong claims for a penalty for holding, Mackay managed to get round Campbell to clear. It was true end-to-end action now, as first, Macdonald failed to convert a Gochan cross, then somehow flicked an inch-perfect Macphail cross past the post, 8 metres out, directly in front of goal.

Moments later, Lee Johnson equalled this, when, sent free on the right, he moved in on goal, drew Craigie, and managed to slip the ball past the post from 8 metres. On 83 minutes Macdonald nodded a Tago cross past, before the clincher arrived two minutes later, when Dan Crossley won the ball out in the right corner, before crossing low. Kenny Beag's shot struck Stephen Boyd's right ankle, and went into the wrong-footed Sweeney's left-hand corner.

On balance Carloway earned their victory, as a sureness in the back four and

aggression in midfield, from Macphail, Squegg, and Kenny Beag, pressed Ness back for lengthy periods and blunted the influence of Domhnall Cheocaidh and Angie Campbell. The defence-splitters of Donnie Macphail were especially effective in creating numerous chances, but it began to look as if Fate had decreed penalties would decide this game, even though, on the night, Carloway were doing everything right.

On another night, the same play might have secured the Blues a hatful; but, of course, on another night, Ness might have got a couple too! Ness refused to crack and, as the contest entered frenetic mode, they could well have snatched it from the Blues, as a desire for victory within 90 minutes became paramount for both sides.

Ness Man of the Match: Angie Campbell.

Carloway Man of the Match: Calum Moody.