

Eilean an Fhraoich Cup Round 1 Second Leg:

West Side 4 (2) Carloway 5 (3) (After extra time) Aggregate: 7-7.

(West Side win 7-6 on penalties).

*Ali Macleod 16,
Scott Maciver 26
John Campbell 71
Gordon Campbell 90+3*

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 1, 89
Stuart Macdonald 10, 57
Donnie Macphail 19*

*At Barvas.
Monday, 4.7.11
Ref.: Billy Macdonald.*

Gordon Craigie

*Lewis "Louie" Macdonald Domhnall Mackay Tom Lawrence Donald "D.I." MacIennan
Stuart Macdonald Dan Crossley Donnie Macphail ■ Murdo "Squeg" Macleod (capt.) ■
Gordon "Tago" Macdonald ■*

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald

Subs.: Paul Forster (Murdo "Squeg" Macleod) 84; Andrew "V.P." Macleod (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 115.

Yellow Cards: Donnie Macphail 70; Murdo "Squeg" Macleod 79; Gordon "Tago" Macdonald 94.

The fourth 2011 encounter of the season for the west coasters, with current statistics recording 2-1 in favour of the Siarachs prior to this game, and once again within the peculiar format of the EaF Cup, which in itself handed the Blues the usual selection problems, with the ineligibility of stalwarts, Calum Tom Moody, Darren Mackinnon, Kevin "Gochan" Macleod, Archie Macdonald, and David Beaton. Work commitments ruled out Andrew "Tago" Maciver, Sandy Morrison, and Seumas Macleod, while Kenny "Beag" MacIennan was also unavailable. Therefore, Tom Lawrence was pulled back from left midfield to plug central defence beside Domhnall Mackay, while Stuart Macdonald moved forward to serve as right midfield/ winger, allowing Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald to lead, hopefully augmented by surges from Dan Crossley through the centre and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald on the left. Again there were problems with the bench, and Paul Forster and John "Brooks" Macdonald were once more drafted in as back-up, in the bull-pen with Kevin Anderson and Andrew "V.P." Macleod. West Side, of course, were without "Spike" or D.J. Clinton; nor was Duncan Maclean onfield, although Athletic's pin-up boy (who doubles as Lewis's best striker), Scott Maciver, returned up front, flanked by those other thorns in the Blues' flesh, Scott Graham and Ali "Ostrich" Macleod.

In the corresponding League fixture in April on this ground, there was an explosive, perhaps record-equalling, opening when Dan Crossley raced through the centre on to a beautiful low Moody pass from the halfway line, to flick past the advancing keeper in 35 seconds! The Blues weren't quite as smart this time, but close, as only a single minute had elapsed when Donnie Macphail found Crossley on the right, and he in turn picked out "Squeg" manoeuvring himself to the bye-line, before hooking high over goal to the far side. A lurking "Tago" met the dropping cross perfectly on the volley, 10

metres out on the left, but Gillies somehow pulled off a miraculous block to divert the thunderbolt on to the underside of the bar, off which it thwacked against the inside of the far post, back off the other post, then out perfectly to a waiting "Dokus" directly in front of goal to thump past the shell-shocked keeper.

Immediately Craigie was called on to block, low to his left, from 16 metres on the right but the early strike had given Carloway a momentum to push forward and West's midfield initially struggled to contain a confident "Squeg" and Macphail, while the pace of Crossley and "Dokus" repeatedly pressured Wallace, Donnie Smith, and Maciver. Another break on the right on 10 minutes led to a trademark "Louie" Macdonald throw-in, 6 metres from the bye-line, which was met by an unmarked Stuart Macdonald standing on the 6-metre line on the nearside of goal and he nodded the ball low past an exposed Gillies.

At this point, it seemed plain sailing for na Gormaich to qualification. However, moments later, West Side did get forward down the left but Graham nodded the inviting cross wide from 16 metres, before Crossley fed "Dokus" through the centre to fire just past from 20 metres. Nevertheless, an over-confident Blues were to allow their high back-line to be caught out by a long ball right to a surging Ali "Ostrich" racing behind MacIennan and well wide of Lawrence; he raced into the right of the box and carefully bent a low shot round the despairing hands of Craigie and just inside the far post. Within minutes, the Blues replied, as the ball came to "Tago" on the edge of a packed box; he edged left, almost at walking pace towards the bye-line, then slipped the ball to his right to Macphail who in turn beat a man to his right, then curled a beautiful lob-shot from 16 metres round and over Gillies, high inside the far post.

Scott Maciver then broke clear and fed Graham but Craigie got down expertly to save his rasping shot from 20 metres. Six minutes later, yet another long ball found the irrepressible Ali "Ostrich" once again jetting behind and wide of the defence and his cross from the bye-line found Scott Maciver arriving in support to blast the ball home first-time from 10 metres. A cricket score now seemed possible, as Carloway responded aggressively, with Iain Gillies called on to make two brilliant stops immediately, first after excellent control by "Dokus", then a turn and shot from 22 metres, and next when Macphail fed Squeg to fire in from the edge of the box. Dan Macphail responded with a shot just over from 22 metres off a Morrison diagonal from the right, before Stuart Macdonald was marginally unlucky to have a goal disallowed for offside. A whirlwind first half concluded with Scott Maciver narrowly failing to equalise when a shot from 20 metres crept inches past Craigie's right-hand post.

An aggressive West Side raced from the blocks as the second half opened: on 49 minutes Ali Macleod fired across goal past Craigie's right-hand post from the right edge of the box, before a typical Scott Maciver breaking run on the left and shot was blocked by Craigie, whipped back in, cleared off the line, and away. However, a classic sucker punch arrived on 57 minutes which seemed to kill the tie stone dead once more. In a tangled, combative midfield, on the centre line, Dan Crossley managed to win the ball, twisted and turned

through crunching tackles towards his own goal, before turning to send an exquisite high diagonal over a stranded defence to Stuart Macdonald ghosting free on the right to lob the advancing keeper from 22 metres.

On 62 minutes, as the Siarachs charged, Carloway received a spectacular gift to finish proceedings, when a high ball sent both "Tago" and "Dokus" free behind the line, but Gillies was off his line in a flash to block brilliantly as "Tago" attempted to lift the ball over him on the edge of the box. This proved costly: ten minutes later a disputed Wallace free-kick was lifted high from the centre line, broke left to the bye-line, from which it was whipped in low to John Campbell, all on his ownsome directly in front of goal, 8 metres out, to fire home.

Campbell, Stewart, and Dan Macphail now had the initiative against a tiring Blues' midfield, and Macphail was desperately unlucky when his header from 16 metres made Craigie's crossbar twang like a bow-string, off a cross from the right. But, then, as so often occurs when a team has dropped out of a game, na Gormaich seemed once more to have saved themselves. As West Side scented victory and surged in numbers, the Blues broke on the left and a high Crossley cross soared high over a crowded 6-metre box. Dokus retreated out to the right to retrieve, 16 metres out, turned, and sent the neatest of lob-shots looping over Gillies and just inside the far top corner of the net.

The pace now became frenetic, but just as Billy Macdonald checked his watch to blow for time, a West break on the right came back to Gordon Campbell, 20 metres out on the right. He toe-ended the ball low into the box, where it survived lunges by Wallace, Campbell, and several defenders; enough to confuse the keeper who seemed to have it, but it ended up in the net.

Carloway had more of the ball in the opening half of extra-time, without creating any danger as cramp took its toll of their lone striker, "Dokus", then dropped out of sight in the second period as West Side gained the chances to avoid penalties. On 108 minutes Martin Stewart almost broke Craigie's right-hand post, low from the edge of the box on the left, before an unmarked Johnnie Wallace managed to miss completely a Gordon Campbell free-kick from the centre line, on the 6-metre line on the right of goal. On 117 minutes later Craigie grasped a Graham attempt from 20 metres, before Carloway almost stole the game at the death when a Donnie Macphail corner on the left was met by Dan Crossley at the near post; his header flew back across goal high but was headed off the line under the bar by the far post.

Well, *"the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,"* although the God of Job didn't do it four times, and anyway, Carloway gave it away. You could argue that the Blues won this game four times, then lost it four times. Certainly the goals were lost cheaply and there were one or two unfortunate decisions but any successful team prevails over such reverses, and West Side could make the same complaints. There has been an uncomfortable leitmotif running through the last three campaigns, since Carloway's emergence as genuine contenders for honours, where their quality play has frequently established an ascendancy in games, but they then have been unable to kill off an opponent, and have allowed victories to slip away.

Tonight they controlled large parts of the game, at times seemed about to add to their lead, but then West Side clawed their back each time. Perhaps this is what has turned West Side into quite the Cup team of the moment: an unwillingness to surrender in adversity; a determination to come back despite the odds. Certainly, many teams would have given up after 19 minutes of this game. What Carloway must remember, going into Wednesday's League game at Goathill and Saturday's HAC QF especially, is that Carloway actually won this game, indeed won it well, but, not well enough. No one failed to perform, and Domhnall Mackay led by example, strong and dominant in central defence, while Tom Lawrence's marking, positional play, and perfect tackling was reminiscent of Carsten Rumelow at his peak; Dan Crossley was implacable in midfield - decisive in the tackle, forceful coming forward, and creative in his distribution; and "Dokus's" pace and touch made the opposition's job difficult for a long part of the game, though the lack of a natural striker became marked later.

Also, the occasional lapse in concentration at the back, a failure to attack the ball, led to disasters which negated the classy forward running. In addition, an understandable tendency to see the two Scotts as the main dangers pulled "D.I." in to the centre in support, and this left the real danger on the night, Ali "Ostrich", loose on the right, and he, especially, orchestrated the golden chances that sent West on their way. Bon chance aux Siarachs!

Penalties:

West Side

Carloway

Dan Macphail 1-0	Domhnall Mackay1-1
Scott Maciver 2-1	Dan Crossley 2-2
Johnnie Wallace 3-2	Stuart Macdonald (saved)
Martin Stewart (saved)	Tom Lawrence 3-3
Donnie Smith 4-3	Gordon "Tago" Macdonald 4-4
Ally Macleod 5-4	Paul Forster 5-5
Gordon Campbell 6-5	Andrew "V.P." Macleod 6-6
Scott Graham 7-6	Lewis "Louie" Macdonald (saved)

West Side Man of the Match: Ali Macleod.

Carloway Man of the Match: Tom Lawrence.