

Lewis & Harris League:

## **West Side 3 (2) Carloway 4 (2)**

Colin George Morrison 41      Dan Crossley 35 secs.  
Calum Tom Moody 45+3 (o.g.)      Gordon "Tago" Macdonald 26  
Dan Macphail 90+1      Andrew "Tago" Maciver 61, 80

At Lower Barvas,  
Friday, 22.4.10  
Ref.: Billy Macdonald

Gordon Craigie

Andrew "Tago" Maciver      Calum Tom Moody      Domhnall Mackay      Donald "D.I." MacIennan  
Darren Mackinnon      Kenny "Beag" MacIennan      Murdo "Squeg" Macleod (capt.)      Gordon "Tago"  
Macdonald

Dan Crossley      Kevin "Gochan" Macleod

Subs.: Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald (Dan Crossley) 70; Seumas Macleod (Kenny "Beag" MacIennan) 79; Donnie Macphail (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 86.

To Barvas for the first west side derby of the season, a venue which must run Goathill Park close as the Blues' least favourite place to visit on the Long Island. Last July, a last-minute free-kick from Duncan Maclean claimed the points for West, in a bruising encounter which saw D.J. Clinton enjoying an early shower on 65 minutes and in turn led to an ill-tempered final 25 minutes, by no means unusual between the bitterest rivals in Lewis. Thus ended an undefeated Carloway league run of 5 wins and three draws, and further confirmed the gradual unravelling of the Blues' aspirations for 2010. Both sides arrived on Friday, after mixed experience in April: West Side thrashed by Athletic, before thumping Harris, both in Barvas; Carloway seeing off United comfortably, before savouring a champagne victory over the champions, which rapidly degenerated into stale beer in the ABC the following Monday. Against Aths, the problem appeared to be a malfunctioning midfield, which led to inordinate pressure on the defence, resulting in uncertainty and basic errors due to overwork, and in turn starved supply to an isolated forward. Once again, the managerial team moved boldly to rectify apparent weaknesses, and Kenny "Beag" MacIennan returned in midfield, with a new strike team, of Dan Crossley and Kevin "Gochan" Macleod up front. Hence, Donnie Macphail, Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald, and Seumas Macleod joined Billy Anderson and David Beaton on the bench.

The game had an explosive, perhaps record-equalling, opening: West Side kicked off and lost possession midway within the Carloway half; the ball broke forward, and Calum Moody sent a beautiful low right foot pass from the halfway line, curving leftwards between the hardly-warmed-up Donnie Smith and Johnny Wallace, for a sprinting Crossley to jet on to and flick past the advancing keeper. 35 seconds on the clock !!! Everyone looked around at the referee, as if to ask, "*Does that really count?*"

The men from Barvas shrugged it off, however: a Morrison free-kick from 20 metres just cleared the bar, before another Carloway break on the left saw "Gochan" cut inside and shoot well wide, when a reverse pass would have left Crossley free on the left on 16 metres. On 10 minutes an inswinging West corner from the left was headed off the line by "D.I." MacIennan, before another Morrison free-kick 20 metres from the bye-line on the right was headed over by Scott Graham. West Side were beginning to win the midfield battle, denying their opposite numbers time to control and distribute. They were first to tackle, then quick to move the ball forward, with Ali

Macleod causing "D.I." MacLennan all sorts of problems on the right and making it necessary for "Tago" to drop back repeatedly in support. D.J. Clinton was in slippery Wiltord mood, drifting off Domhnall Mackay, elusive, occupying no specific area, allowing Graham to ghost into space between Moody and "Pongo".

However, the pace of Macleod and Crossley were causing reciprocal problems at the other end, with Crossley dropping back to draw Smith forward; Macleod's explosive running was troubling "Spike", and forward surges by Mackinnon and "Pongo" down the right were pressuring Alex "Nibble" Matheson. On 24 minutes a "Gochan" sprint down the left led to a low cross being flicked up and backwards on to the top of the bar by Crossley; then, two minutes later, another glorious Calum Tom daisycutter, a carbon copy of his pass for the opener, released "Tago" behind his marker; he advanced rapidly and, just inside the left of the box, lifted the ball exquisitely with his left foot over Macphee high inside the right-hand post. One for "Tago's" scrapbook.

Carlaway had drifted out of the game (manifested by the countless and needless free-kicks they were giving away in midfield and round their area), yet now found themselves two goals up. Still West pressed: on 33 minutes a Clinton break on the right led to his deep cross being headed against Craigie's right-hand post by Graham, before the way back was gifted to them. A textbook sucker punch: on 41 minutes a Blues' corner on the left broke out to the edge of the box, before hurriedly being pushed further out to Mackinnon who slipped it sideways to "D.I.", midway inside the Barvas men's half; but the pass was short and MacLennan could not get there. The ball was whipped forward and right to Clinton, bursting into na Gormaich's half, with Colin Morrison charging through the centre like Usain Bolt, to make it 2-on-1 on Mackinnon. As he was challenged, Clinton unselfishly slid the ball into the now unmarked Morrison's path for him to run 25 metres, draw Craigie, and finish clinically from 18 metres, just inside the keeper's left-hand post. Classic !

Not so classic was the equaliser, deep into injury-time. Yet another free-kick was given away pointlessly on the halfway line, out on the left. "Nibble" punted a huge ball smack into Carlaway's 6-metre box, where a retreating Moody just got enough of his head to it to discomfit Craigie and allow the ball to drop ever so neatly into the same spot in the net as Colin George had chosen seven minutes before.

No doubt the Carlaway boys believed they were starring in the latest re-make of "*Groundhog Day*". Half-time within sight; clean sheet secured, against the odds; a chance to re-group; suddenly a two-goal express train thwacks you. It was essential to avoid shipping a quick third, as occurred at Goathill. As ever, Calum Moody figured heavily in a second half charge to prevent West establishing an early supremacy. On 49 minutes, a "Sqweg" free-kick from the right halfway line was headed past from 10 metres by Calum "Tom"; three minutes later he nodded over a mirror image free-kick on the left from "Tago"; but soon the warning signs for the Blues were re-appearing, as the men from Barvas re-asserted themselves over a sluggish midfield, and the defence were pressured centrally and on the left, cutting any offensive activity to fast-breaking by "Gochan" and Crossley.

On 61 minutes an unexpected breakthrough occurred: a trademark "Tago" corner on the left cleared a massed defensive line to meet "Pongo" unmarked at the far post on the 6-metre line, and he reacted smartly to poke the ball home with his right foot.

An end-to-end slugging contest ensued: on 71 minutes a "Spike" attempt was deflected over off Morrison, before Kenny "Dokus" went close at the other end. On

77 minutes a Darren Mackinnon header gave the Blues a glimmer of hope, but it was the arrival of Seumas Macleod two minutes later (for a struggling Kenny "Beag"), together with the speed and control of earlier substitution, Kenny "Dokus", that gave Carloway a weight and presence in the middle of the park, which kept them steady almost to the end. This was helped by a defensive blunder similar to Graeme Mackenzie's a fortnight before at Cnoc a' Choilich: an attempt to play out of defence broke down near the halfway line inside West's half as the ball was charged down by "Pongo", who then broke forward through the middle, as the Barvas defence seemed to part like the Red Sea before Moses and the Israelites. He carried it unchallenged to just inside the box before slipping it past the helpless keeper's left-hand.

Next, D.J. Clinton passed up a great opportunity to resurrect his side, sent clear on the left, but he telegraphed his intentions, and Craigie guessed correctly to block him superbly to his left about 12 metres from goal. A minute later Craigie reacted expertly to save on his left from Ali Macleod. After Moody headed another "Sqweg" free-kick over, that seemed to be it, but a minute into injury-time, one of those *it-depends-who-you support* goals arrived. A West Side surge sent Dan Macphail clear; the linesman flagged offside; the Carloway defence stopped; Macphail converted; the referee awarded the goal. Carloway placed the ball where they insisted a free-kick should be given; they would not return the ball. A confrontation was defused by Clinton retrieving the ball and placing it on the centre spot. After a final West flurry, which saw the ball fly across the Carloway goal and past, the final whistle went. What if it had gone in? Ouch! Don't even think about it!

It was a very even game, fortunately unpunctuated by the customary frenzied tackling and bad temper which have become a characteristic feature of this derby. The old question of "*desert*" naturally cropped up after a victory like this: "*Did the Blues deserve to win?*", but in sport, as in many other areas of life, such a question seems inappropriate. You either win or you don't. If you score four and the other side score three, you don't deserve to win; you simply win. Carloway took all four goals well, as did Colin George Morrison take his. Dan Macphail's? Hmmmm ..... . No comment.

As ever, Gordon Craigie and Calum Moody were stalwarts, and "Pongo" excellent coming forward, though Domhnall Mackay and "D.I." MacIennan had game-long difficulties facing outstanding forward play from D.J. Clinton and Ali Macleod. Equally, "Gochan"'s, Crossley's, and Darren Mackinnon's pace (Kenny "Dokus's" too, later on) caused similar problems for "Spike" and "Nibble", and kept an impressive Johnny Wallace and Donnie Smith fully occupied, but once again, the danger of losing the game emanated from the middle of the park. Indeed, after the opening flurry, it was not until the final quarter of the game, especially after the arrival of Seumas Macleod and Kenny "Dokus" to link up with "Tago", that some sort of "*hold*" was established in that area, but that in turn meant weakening attacking options, as Carloway's most effective forward runner, Dan Crossley, was sacrificed to achieve this.

West Side Man of the Match: D.J. Clinton.

Carloway Man of the Match: Andrew "Tago" Maciver.