

Coop Cup Round 1:

Carloway 9 (3) North Uist United 0 (0)

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 2, 60, 71, 76, 87

Archie Macdonald 13

Andrew "Tago" Maciver 21

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 51

Kevin "Barra" Macneil 67

At Cnoc a' Choilich

Saturday, 30.4.10

Ref.: D.J. Maclean

David Beaton

Andrew "Tago" Maciver Calum Tom Moody Domhnall Mackay Donald "D.I." MacIennan

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Donnie Macphail Murdo "Squeg" Macleod (capt.) Darren Mackinnon

Archie Macdonald Kevin "Gochan" Macleod

Subs.: Billy Anderson (Murdo "Squeg" Macleod) 46; Andrew "V.P." Macleod (Donald "D.I."

MacIennan) 58; Kevin "Barra" Macneil (Andrew "Tago" Maciver) 63.

A beautiful, but windy, morning greeted the two sides for their third meeting in five years, the Blues having already seen off their southern adversaries handsomely in June last year at Paibeil Schoolground, on a pitch which closely resembled a newly-cropped wheatfield, and then narrowly in May, 2006, at Lionacleit, both games in the Highland Amateur. Today, there were only four survivors from 2006: Mackay, "Sqweg", "Dokus, and "Gochan", though another, "Windy", is now Assistant Manager; even "Buck" Macaskill, who refereed that day, has gone. A beautiful, though piercingly cold, midday meeting at Lionacleit saw them recover from a lackadaisical first half performance and deficit, courtesy of a 22-metre right-foot cracker from "Dawie" Maccorquodale, to edge a narrow victory, thanks to Chris Macleod and Scott Macaulay.

Apparently, that was the first time a Carloway eleven had won two consecutive rounds in the HAC and their first-ever victory outwith Lewis and Harris. Times change, sometimes dramatically: last year the Blues were rampant, against a weakened Uibhisteach side, further inhibited by a 25th minute back injury to playmaker, Calum "Shin" Macdonald.

There were a few changes, by choice and necessity, in the Blues' starting line-up: David Beaton, who rivals Gordon Craigie for the title of "*Best Goalkeeper on the Island*" was given a first start, while Kenny "Beag" MacIennan and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald were injured, and Seumas Macleod unavailable. This entailed a bit of jiggery-pokery in midfield, with Darren Mackinnon switching from right to left and Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald dropping back to operate as more or less a traditional right winger; the creativity of Donnie Macphail was added to the drive of "Sqweg" in the centre and Archie Macdonald joined Kevin "Gochan" Macleod up front to lead the charge.

And charge it was! On a freshly-cut pitch which was a work of art in itself, with concentric grass circles radiating out from the centre circle, na Gormaich immediately identified weaknesses down the flanks, which stretched the defence, forcing Calum "Shin" Macdonald and his red-haired assistant outwards to cover, and

allowing Carloway to surge forward through an invisible opposing midfield. The Uibhistich were unable to clear properly, therefore the midfield were unable to gather, then build out of defence into attack. Immediately a break down the right led to a "Pongo" throw-in finding Macphail who hooked it back to "Gochan" running leftwards along the edge of the box. He flicked the ball carefully with the outside of his right foot round a defender and beyond a stranded keeper, low to his right.

On 6 minutes "Sqweg" drove over from 22 metres, then a deflected "Dokus" shot was blocked by Docherty for a corner. The pressure was relentless: "Pongo" again burst down the right and his low cross was met by Archie Macdonald, to send a right-foot lob over Docherty from 16 metres. It was 17 minutes before Beaton touched the ball, to deal with a pass-back, and two minutes later a "Dokus" cross was knocked on to the bar before the goalie tipped it over. A minute later Docherty had to move smartly to tip another dangerous cross-ball over. However, on 21 minutes, a burst down the left led to one full-back, "D.I.", crossing to another full-back, "Pongo" (Carloway's leading scorer!), to head home. On 25 minutes a colossal "Shin" free-kick from the centre-line forced Beaton to palm over, and led to a dangerous pair of corners on the left. On 33 minutes Macphail was sent clear but flicked over, before a "Dokus" attempt was blocked for a corner. On 42 minutes an exquisite Mcphail corner on the right was headed against the post by Mackay.

There was no let-up: right away, a fast break led to "Gochan" releasing "Dokus" on the right, to twist and whack a right foot shot from 16 metres past Docherty and nearly break his right-hand post. Minutes later United lost the ball in midfield and a killer Macphail lob found "Dokus" running unmarked in the same spot; he steadied himself and placed the ball carefully past Docherty to his left.

From the restart, a surprise shot from the centre circle had Beaton moving fast to flick over, leading to a deadly corner from the left which provided North Uist with their best chance. Fast and hard it was met by the head of no.10 on the 6-metre line directly in front of goal, but its pace and height were difficult to direct and it flew up and away.

On 54 minutes "Pongo" broke down the right but Archie Macdonald couldn't connect with his fast, low cross. Five minutes later Macdonald was sent clear; he flicked the ball neatly past the keeper - and his left-hand post. However, on the hour, the "Gochan Roadshow" took off: first, Mackinnon set him up from the left, to turn and hook home from 12 metres. Billy Anderson was blocked, then "Dokus", before Anderson fired over from 22 metres. Anderson then sent Kevin "Barra" steaming into the area on the left. Docherty did well to block his first shot but Macneill followed through to smash the rebound past him and home from 12 metres.

United were now thoroughly disheartened: another Jimmy McIlroy defence-splitter from Macphail enabled "Gochan" to convert, before the same player nodded home a "Dokus" cross from the right. On 83 minutes Archie Macdonald struck the post from yet another cross from the right, before a slick move: "Gochan to "Dokus" to "Gochan" saw "Gochan" racing into the box to knock home his fifth, despite the despairing foot of Docherty diverting it on to the post and in.

It's hard to decide what sort of meaning to attach to this game, the opposition was

so weak. Or were Carloway simply so good that they made United look weak? Better to say it was somewhere between. Certainly the Blues were unremittingly focussed, with no one putting a foot wrong; the defence were singularly untroubled; the midfield solid, with Donnie Macphail's onward delivery killer sweet; Charlie Gallagher never dispatched a ball better. Up front "Dokus" and "Gochan" were uncontainable, with the latter having a forward's dream afternoon: elusive; roaming free; every flick, touch, and strike effective, and invariably creating oceans of space to finish.

For United, it was a game of willing, though incoordinated, endeavour: four seasoned campaigners, surrounded by a group of young helpers, who fought doggedly, but without direction or power, on the ball and in the tackle. In Western Isles football, you cannot watch and admire; otherwise, you are brushed aside and drop out of sight. Calum "Shin" and his fellow central defender worked tirelessly throughout, but were simply overwhelmed; no.11 in midfield was capable and intelligent on the ball, but one man doesn't make a midfield; while no. 10 must have lost a stone in effort and willingness up front but only received a couple of decent balls in the whole game.

North Uist United Man of the Match: Calum "Shin" Macdonald.

Carloway Man of the Match: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod.