

Jock Stein Cup Round 2:

## West Side 2 (2) Carloway 1 (0)

*Gordon Campbell 21  
Ali Macleod 33*

*Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod 78*

*At Lower Barvas,  
Monday, 16.5.11  
Ref.: Robert Mackay*

*David Beaton*

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver Calum Tom Moody Domhnall Mackay Donald "D.I." MacIennan  
Darren Mackinnon Dan Crossley Seumas Macleod Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod (capt.) Gordon  
"Tago" Macdonald*

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald*

*Subs.: Archie Macdonald (Gordon "Tago" Macdonald) 59; Donnie Macphail (Seumas Macleod) 70.*

*Yellow Card: Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod 84.*

After last month's narrow League victory for Carloway, the two West Side rivals squared up for their first cup clash of the season, with two further EaF clashes scheduled in June and July, and the return League fixture at Cnoc a' Choilich penned in for late July. The 4-3 affair had been a disturbing affair for both sides, with the Blues hardly convincing as they edged the points, and the Barvas men feeling they deserved some return for their efforts that night. This victory led on to na Gormaich establishing themselves as League leaders, though their ability to go the distance is in question because of the manner of their mauling by Athletic in the ABC Cup. West Side's promise for 2011 was immediately in doubt, due to early reverses at the hands of Carloway and Athletic, but defeats of Harris (twice), Back, Southend, Ness, and Point, plus ABC Cup glory, have proved the earlier tipsters correct.

Tonight there were several changes to the Blues' starting line-up, enforced and tactical: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod was unavailable but Seumas Macleod had returned to the island and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald and Kenny "Beag" MacIennan were passed fit. "Tago" slotted in in left midfield with Darren Mackinnon switching to the right; Seumas Macleod came in in the centre of midfield with Dan Crossley on his right, leaving Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald to carry the banner up front alone. David Beaton was given the nod in goal, while Kenny "Beag" joined Donnie Macphail, Archie Macdonald, Andrew "V.P." Macleod and Gordon Craigie in the bull pen. A welcome piece of news for them was the absence of Scott Graham to face them (always a pain in the neck against the Blues), although John Campbell was to prove every bit as troublesome; likewise, Johnny Wallace, outstanding last Friday in the ABC Cup Final, was absent, so Duncan Maclean moved central alongside Donnie Smith, with Alex "Nibble" Matheson taking his place at left-back.

There was no explosive start this time round, as, initially, both sides struggled to impose some sort of pattern on a scrappy game. An early flurry by the Blues saw "Pongo" bursting forward to supply "Tago", 16 metres out in front of goal, but his shot was blocked. Then Gordon Campbell miscued a sweeping diagonal from the left halfway line, allowing an unchallenged "Tago" to move in menacingly on the left of the box, but his low, hard drive from 18 metres just cleared Macphee's far left-hand post. On 11 minutes a low John Campbell drive from 20 metres had Beaton

scrambling to push away well, low to his left, before Calum Moody sent a low free-kick from 22 metres just past the left-hand post. Next, John Campbell had to reach back to cross-head, but the angle was too difficult and the ball sailed over the Blues' bar.

Unexpectedly, on 21 minutes, a freakish goal opened West's account. Carloway's high back-line tactics were already causing them problems as, eager to assist a malfunctioning midfield to support an isolated "Dokus" up front, they left themselves open to aerial balls from the West defence, or Colin George, clearing the heads of Mackay *et al* and allowing the slippery Clinton, lying off Mackay and usually to his left, and John Campbell to use their pace to outrun the back wall. On 21 minutes such an attack led to a *melée* in the Blues' box; a move to play out of defence, led to a further stramash; then an attempted clearance was blocked, before the ball was scrambled away to the Blues' left, as far as Gordon Campbell, whose measured cross-cum-shot, was caught by the wind and carried over Beaton's head and in to the far, top corner of the net.

Despite the industry of Crossley and Macleod, Carloway were being pushed out of the game and largely confined to the occasional break, usually down the right with "Pongo" or Mackinnon, as West Side, as they had done in the previous contest, established a grip on midfield, denying Carloway time to control, organise, and distribute. On 25 minutes, Mackinnon did get the better of "Nibble" on the right but Macphee moved swiftly, to deny Macleod superbly at the near post. A second Mackinnon break and cross saw "Tago" miscue in front of goal. A "Tago" cross saw "Dokus" shoot weakly at Macphee, before the way back to the Semi-Final suddenly became much longer for the Blues. Yet another high ball on 33 minutes cleared Mackay and Clinton spun and turned on to it like a hare. His squared pass from the left of the box, 12 metres from the bye-line, just beat the inrushing Campbell but carried on to the unmarked Ali Macleod, coming in at speed on the right, to send the sweetest of first-touches back across Beaton and inside the keeper's right-hand post. An absolute peach! Antônio Careca couldn't have done it better!

The Blues tried desperately to re-group and gain a foothold before half-time as West subconsciously relaxed, but only two further chances materialised: on 38 minutes a "Tago" corner led to a hectic scramble in the West box, with the ball being blocked twice, before being booted clear; then, on 43 minutes, Macphee had to move sharply to palm a Macleod cross over his bar.

How well Carloway used the wind in the second half was crucial to recovery, and it did help, to a certain extent, to push West Side regularly back into their own half. The trouble for Carloway was the high ball forward, *à la* the old Wimbledon or Stan Allardyce's Bolton, did not have a target man, like Scott Macaulay or Kevin "Savo". The Blues are *balls-to-feet* people, even at the back. Kenny "Dokus" is an excellent footballer, but he is no Don Kichenbrand, and even the latter frequently needed a sidekick. A pattern quickly emerged: a wind-assisted Carloway came forward, as "Sqweg", Crossley and Macleod tried to pressure the opposition. West Side let them come, confident in their own defence's ability to thwart and block, and use "Spike", Morrison and Macphail to supply the pace of Clinton, Ali Macleod and Campbell to create the killer chance.

On 51 minutes a Seumas Macleod break and cross found no takers, but immediately Ali Macleod escaped his marker on the right and his carefully-flighted cross from the bye-line found an unmarked Macphail on Carloway's right but his header from 10 metres came back off the bar. On the hour the Blues got themselves into trouble trying to play the ball out of defence and were lucky to escape with a corner. Immediately "Tago" was sacrificed and Archie Macdonald came on up front to bolster a misfiring attack; "Dokus" moved right and Mackinnon switched to the left. But the breakthrough still wouldn't come. It took Carloway to the 68th minute to create their next real opening and even then it was from a Seumas Macleod free-kick, 25 metres out on the left, which Macphee somehow lost in the wind and was fortunate to flick away for a corner. Another West surge on 73 minutes saw Beaton just manage to block at Clinton's feet 10 metres out in front of goal, before Carloway suddenly found themselves back in the game. A "Sqweg" free-kick 22 metres out on the right was caught by the wind and carried in under the bar, where Macphee was unable to get to it properly in a crowded goal-line and could only knock it on to the bar and watch it drop in.

Naturally the pace now became hectic but still the Blues were unable to create any clear-cut chances against a competent defence. On 85 minutes, "Dokus" brought an awkward cross from the left down beautifully, 18 metres out on the right of the box, but his drive thudded into the side-netting. In the fourth minute of injury-time, a final golden chance came begging. A Carloway attack was repulsed, high, but the return ball in, behind an advancing defence, found three Carloway men running in unmarked behind the line. A squared pass reached Mackinnon unmarked, 16 metres out in front of goal, but just as he had done in the final minute of normal-time in the ABC Cup Final against Point, Macphee was out like a flash to block brilliantly and save the tie.

At times the approach of both sides in this match resembled that of last season's Coop Cup Final, especially in the second half. That game demonstrated the Mourinho maxim graphically: that running, possession, territory amounted to zilch, without firepower. Then, as here, Carloway huffed and puffed, and West Side combatted, sparred, then played around and over them - fast, and without fuss. This game demonstrated also that quantity of chances created may be of minor importance. It is their quality, the familiarity of the tactical break, that counts, and the awareness of the players concerned to know what might be coming and capitalise on it. Each of the West Side team tonight appeared settled and comfortable in their roles and positions, and stuck doggedly to them, even those who might not have been in their favoured slots.

No one in the Carloway side can be criticised for individual performance or application, their commitment; it was simply style, or tactical approach, or lack of it, that presented problems, especially in midfield. During Carloway games, the Blues' midfield is as busy as Manhattan Island, as the back four push up to assist (which, of course, can lead to knock-on defensive problems); and the wide forwards drop back, in turn leaving, repeatedly, a solitary and isolated striker up front. For all na Gormaichs' eventual possession of ball and territory, and aggressive running, their play was mainly *middle-of the-park* stuff, rarely cutting the defence open with the killer ball between and behind, nor was there a target man in attack to lead any charge or knock the ball down for the follow-up or in. Because of this, Carloway, not

for the first time, simply did not look dangerous and rarely seemed to have West Side rattled.

West Side Man of the Match: Ali Macleod.

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