

Lewis and Harris League:

## Carloway 4 (3) Harris 0 (0)

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 29, 32, 36*

*Dan Crossley 72*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich.*

*Monday, 30.5.11.*

*Ref.: Ewen Macaskill.*

*Gordon Craigie*

*Darren Mackinnon Calum Tom Moody ■ Domhnall Mackay Donald "D.I." MacIennan  
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod (capt.) Seumas Macleod Gordon "Tago"  
Macdonald*

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Dan Crossley*

*Subs.: Archie Macdonald (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 63; Donnie Macphail (Gordon "Tago" Macdonald) 63; Calum Macleod (Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod) 72.*

*Yellow Card: Calum Tom Moody 66.*

On a cold, bright evening, Carloway finally experienced some action, and took the field hopeful of continuing their excellent opening League run with a fifth straight victory, this time over Harris. The omens were favourable: 6 wins in the Blues' opening 8 fixtures, while the Hearachs have had a mixed series of results and, indeed, had lost on their last six visits to Cnoc a' Choilich. Surprisingly, historians have to go all the way back to the 15th of May, 2006, to find Harris's last victory here, 3-1 in the League, Scott Macaulay being on target early that night before the points disappeared into the late Spring twilight in the second half. The past action-free fortnight has had some advantages, allowing several nagging injuries to be resolved, notably to Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald and Kevin "Gochan" Macleod, although Kenny "Beag" MacIennan was still rested and Andrew "Tago" Maciver unavailable, due to work commitments. Darren Mackinnon dropped back to right wing-back, while Kenny "Dokus" slotted in in front of him and Dan Crossley moved forward to partner Kevin "Gochan" up front, in an initially aggressive 4-4-2 formation.

Carloway's opening assault seemed to take Harris off-balance, and the latter spent most of the opening half trying to establish some form of equilibrium in central defence, and combat sustained pressure in the midfield, as the Blues surged confidently, assisted by a steady sou'westerly. Right away "Sqweg" was freed down the right and his searching cross was hooked over by an unmarked Crossley, 16 metres out in front of goal. "Dokus" and "Gochan" were both sent clear on the right to shoot from the edge of the box; then Moody headed just over, 8 metres out at the left-hand post, from a "Sqweg" corner on the left. On 15 minutes a free-kick wide on the left, 22 metres out, enabled Moody to send a daisycutter whizzing round the wall but just outside an unsighted goalkeeper's left-hand post. Harris were living dangerously, stretched thin across the field as they were, and seemed unable to mark out the centre, where Crossley and "Gochan" roamed free, or stifle either wing as "Dokus" and "Tago" broke at will, supported by the overlapping Mackinnon and "D.I." This, in turn, allowed Seumas Macleod and "Sqweg" to come charging through the middle.

An inability to mark permitted chances to accumulate: "Sqweg" sent a right-foot shot past from 18 metres, before Seumas Macleod sent the ball over, as it broke to him in

front of goal, 18 metres out, after a cross from the left had been scrambled away. A screaming Crossley cross from the right just eluded "Tago" at the far post; then a Moody header from a "Tago" corner was blocked on the line before the keeper dropped on it gratefully. Suddenly, on 22 minutes, Harris had their first real chance: a golden break from the right side of the halfway line. The ball broke off Moody and Harris's young number 6, Callum Masson, who had "TROUBLE" stamped on his forehead, charged on to it in a flash and outpaced the defence towards Craigie. Unfortunately, on the edge of the box, he decided to cut inside, allowing the defence to retreat between him and the goal; he twisted and turned, but the opportunity was gone, and he ended up playing the ball back, and Craigie went back to his newspaper.

Seven minutes later Carloway finally got the anxiously-awaited breakthrough: a "Tago" corner on the left was met yet again at the far post by Moody, came back off the bar, hit a defender's shoulder, and was nodded home by the predatory "Gochan". Minutes later, Crossley was sent into the box, seemed to have been crowded out by Kyle Macleod, but managed to force the ball right for "Gochan" to slide it home from 10 metres. Next, Harris's no.6 did send the ball just over, well-placed, before "Gochan's" lightning hat-trick was completed. A classic Frank de Boer ball from Darren Mackinnon, deep in his own half, flew nearly 40 metres centrally between Louie Macdonald and Macleod, and "Gochan" forced himself on to it, under pressure, and as the goalie came at him, managed to squirm to his side and send the ball into the bottom left-hand corner. The Carloway storm slackened after that, and a physical stalemate ensued, but on 42 minutes, the Hearachs almost suffered again, when magical control by "Dokus" on the right controlled a cross-pass to him but Crossley over-anticipated his cross slightly and could only reach back to flick the ball over from 8 metres.

Harris were more of a presence in the second half, dogged and committed, but still lacked a cutting edge, especially after a crunching tackle reduced Callum Masson's effectiveness, leaving James Maclean to plough a lone furrow in attack. Immediately, a deep "Dokus" cross spelt danger but was too much for "Tago's" attempted scissor-kick. Then a Seumas cross from the left set up a "Dokus" drive which was beaten away for a corner. A great chance came begging for the opposition on 51 minutes, when Maclean was sent clear on the right, then cut in, but as he fired from 16 metres out on the right, Craigie rushed out like Carl Lewis to block superbly with his left-foot.

Andy Morrison and Ali "Koch" Morrison were finally managing to establish a midfield presence, to shield their pressurised central defence, and this was assisted by the diminishing effectiveness of "Gochan" (was he injured?) and his eventual substitution, along with "Tago". Seumas and "Sqweg" were now forced wide, more to the left, and "Dokus's" influence faded. However, at the back, na Gormaich's back-line remained dominant against a thin Harris forward presence, and continued to enforce a high back-line, which in turn repeatedly impelled the Blues forward and maintained a relentless pressure. Eventually it paid off in the 72 minutes when a break on the left allowed "D.I." to overlap and gain possession, double back, and send a high ball into the Harris 6 metre box; Archie Macdonald challenged for the high ball, which broke back off a Harris shoulder, and gave Crossley time to steady up and head home forcefully. As the clock ran down, the last real chance of the game came on 78 minutes when Calum Moody met a Donnie Macphail corner from the left but his header, 8 metres out, whistled over.

Carloday clearly enjoyed being back in action, with every player anxious for the ball, and happy on it, although it was clear that up front a little sharpening of the gunsights is necessary after the lay-off. Pace and movement were the key to victory here as "Gochan's" and Crossley's unpredictable runs unsettled Macleod and Macdonald, while wide, fast breaks from "Tago" and "Dokus" - and Mackinnon and Macleannan - kept the back-line spread. In the first half the Morrisons were unable to drop back in support, in face of the power of "Sqweg" and the Barca-style play from Crossley and Seumas Macleod: *win the ball-run-pass-move-receive-run-pass, etc.*, and *if you lose the ball, tackle back - and back - and back - till you win it back, then run-pass .....* ,and the breaks repeatedly appeared.

At the other end, apart from 3-4 significant moments, the defence were like granite, with Moody and Mackay totally on message, and even these few crises were not of their making, but resulted from clever play from Callum Masson and James Maclean. Such fitness for purpose will be essential in what will no doubt be sterner tests ahead, very, very soon, on Saturday next in the HAC, versus Lochs, and in the crunch League game at Back the following Monday.

Harris Man of the Match: Callum Masson.

Carloday Man of the Match: Dan Crossley.