

Eilean an Fhraoich Cup Round 1 First Leg:

Carloway 2 (1) West Side 3 (3)

Domhnall Mackay 28 (pen) Scott Maciver 13, 34
Gordon Campbell 87 (o.g.) John Campbell 23

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Monday, 13.6.11

Ref.: D.J. Maclean

Gordon Craigie

Lewis "Louie" Macdonald Domhnall Mackay Stuart Macdonald Andrew "V.P." Macleod
Dan Crossley Seumas Macleod Murdo "Squeg" Macleod (capt.) Tom Lawrence
Kenny "Beag" MacIennan Sandy Morrison

Subs.: Paul Forster (Dan Crossley) 46.

Yellow Card: Andrew "V.P." Macleod 44; Sandy Morrison 66; Stuart Macdonald 90+1

The third meeting of the season for the two west coast sides, with one narrow win apiece, but this time coloured by the exigencies of the EaF Cup, and that in itself handing the Blues immediate selection problems. Ineligible, right away, were defensive rock, Calum Tom Moody, plus Darren Mackinnon, Kevin "Gochan" Macleod, Archie Macdonald, and David Beaton, while Rockness claimed Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, Kevin Anderson, and Donald "D.I." MacIennan. Work commitments ruled out Andrew "Tago" Maciver and Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald was suffering from a cracked rib, sustained against Lochs. Domhnall Mackay had a nasty gash from Friday and Sandy Morrison a black eye but were passed fit. Solution for the Blues? Form a Carloway-United Select, although there were problems with back-up, and Paul Forster, Kevin "Savo" Smith, Donald "Tokan" Chisholm, and John "Brooks" Macdonald were drafted in as substitutes.

West Side appeared more like their normal selves, which, of course, helped team cohesion, though there was no "Spike" or D.J. Clinton; Liam Coleman came in at right-back; John Campbell started in right midfield although he didn't stay there, unfortunately for Carloway, and the line was led by the man the Carloway boys love to hate, Scott Maciver, who averages about two goals a game against na Gormaich. He didn't disappoint.

When these two teams meet - or collide might be more appropriate - as in most derby occasions, there seems to be an extra aggressive edge, a desperation at an individual level not to be deemed wanting, sometimes lacking in other contests. The fact that this was a cup game exacerbated this approach and the tie lived down to such expectations. Carloway opened aggressively, trying to force the pace and refuse to allow the Barvas men to settle, but a pushing midfield and high back-line naturally created space for the fast break, and despite Clinton's absence, West broke easily - and frequently - mainly on the flanks and the opening ten minutes saw them have three reasonable chances to open. On 6 minutes a defence-splitter enabled John Campbell to break clear on the left but as he advanced unhindered, he snatched his shot from 20 metres and it went high and wide. Minutes later a lay-back centrally gave Dan Macphail an opportunity from 20 metres but the ball, hit cleanly enough, cleared the bar. Then Ali "Barvas" was released on the overlap on the right but he totally miscued from 18 metres.

On 11 minutes the Blues' first half-chance arrived when Tom Lawrence's high cross from the right was palmed onwards by Gillies, then cut back to "Squeg" 22 metres out, in front of goal, but his carefully-placed strike went straight to the keeper. Back came West Side and Macphail was sent behind the line, slightly to the right, but his shot went across goal and wide; then Seumas Macleod was denied brilliantly by Gillies, low to his right, when he connected with a low cross from the right, 10 metres out to the left of goal. Suddenly a remarkable goal enlivened the night: Scott Maciver (who else?) gathered the ball, midway within his own half, out on the left, and moved forward, tentatively at first; his deceptive progress kept him left, off his marker, and the line retreated with him as he ran the length of the park, surviving a couple of lunges, and benefitting from Mackay et al mindful that he might switch the ball into Graham or Macphail or Campbell. And so it was he reached a point 12 metres out in the box, on the left, drew Craigie, then slipped the ball round the keeper beautifully with his right foot and into the far corner of the net. Exquisite goal if you're from Barvas; lamentable for the Blues!

Carloway were knocked off-kilter by this: moments later Colin George Morrison headed over unchallenged from an Ali Macleod corner, 16 metres out, then had a free-kick 22 metres out blocked by the wall. On 19 minutes a Seumas Macleod free-kick from 25 metres on the left cleared the defence but went right to the keeper, before the evening really turned sour for na Gormaich, when Andrew "V.P." barged into the back of Ali Macleod at the edge of the box on the right. Craigie guessed right and blocked well to his left but Campbell was fastest to react and smacked the rebound high into the net to Craigie's left. The heads went down but Carloway were soon handed an unexpected life-line when Donnie Smith inexplicably lunged at Crossley wide on the left, close to the goal-line, and offered Carloway a way back. Domhnall Mackay opted against Colin George's placed approach and almost burst the net high to Gillies's left.

Congratulations all round were hardly over before the ball was being picked out of the Blues' net for a third time. An attack on the right broke down but Andrew "V.P.'s" attempted hoofed clearance was miscued across his own box, nodded on, and Maciver, 10 metres out on the left, swung perfectly to volley the ball high into the net with his left foot.

Carloway sagged after that, with only a Kenny "Beag" attempt going well-wide before West had two further opportunities to extend their lead: on 40 minutes John Campbell was clear again, centrally, but had too much time to think, and allowed Craigie to race out and second-guess him low to his left, 12 metres from goal; then a Scott Graham shot from 20 metres slipped just past Craigie's right-hand post.

Carloway opened in similar mood to the first half, knowing an early goal was vital; the all-tackling all-running approach of Seumas Macleod and Dan Crossley, allied to the covering, tackling, and crossing of "Squeg", began to bear fruit, as West either were pushed back or subconsciously relaxed, 3-1 up, after all. A "Squeg" cross from the left was palmed on, under pressure by Gillies, before Scott Maciver had a hat-trick chance as the ball was slipped through to him, 14 metres out in the centre, but for once he showed he was human by skying the ball well over. Then it was Sandy Morrison's turn for a red face when a swift Carloway break down the right was played in to him bursting through right of centre but he totally miscued from 22

metres and nearly hit the Free Church.

A grinding midfield battle was developing, with no quarter given or expected, supported by two increasingly dominant defences, as Donnie Smith, Johnnie Wallace, Domhnall, and Stuart Macdonald stamped on every forward movement. Goal-scoring opportunities became scarcer. On the hour a John Campbell foul, 20 metres out on the right, enabled "Squeg" to send the ball just over the bar; on 72 minutes a defence-splitter from Seumas Macleod gave Kenny "Beag" the edge on Wallace's right in a goalward race, but he lobbed over from 18 metres. A "Louie" Macdonald free-kick broke in the box to Macleod, 16 metres from goal, but force of numbers crowded out his drive. On 84 minutes a diagonal from the right came through to Kenny "Beag", 8 metres out, to the left of goal but again he lifted it over.

As the clock ran down, na Gormaich suddenly, and unexpectedly, made the Barvas leg of the tie a whole lot more interesting, when a curious goal narrowed the gap. On 87 minutes a Tom Lawrence corner on the left came in high to West Side's right-hand post and Gordon Campbell, attempting to head clear, got the slightest of touches to it with the top of his head to make it carry over Iain Gillies and into the far corner of the goal. Bad, or good, luck, depending on your point of view. Yet, Carlaway were nearly to suffer once more in injury-time, when a splendid right diagonal out of midfield sent Ali Macleod behind Stuart Macdonald on his right, to head towards goal, only for the desperate defender to bundle him to the ground, 22 metres out; fortunately, Mackay and "Louie" Macdonald had got back and he didn't appear to be the last man. The Colin George free-kick crept over the bar.

An entertaining, full-bodied game. Aren't they always between these two sides? The commitment and industry of both sides was without question. The contest came close to demonstrating, graphically, the old cliché: "a game of two halves". The four central defenders had decisive performances, with Domhnall Mackay mindful that he had to lead a makeshift line, and tackling ferociously and intervening decisively, repeatedly. Dan Macphail and Colin George ran the show in the first half, with Scott Maciver, whenever he received the ball at his feet, preferably facing forward, on a level of his own. However, the diligence and work-rate of Seumas Macleod and Dan Crossley, plus no little skill, was to gain the Blues a slight edge in the second half, which unfortunately for the Blues could not reap rewards further down the field. It was difficult for Kenny "Beag" (and Andrew "V.P." for that matter), after a long period on the sidelines, and still carrying a slight injury, to plunge into an up-boys-and-at-'em! cup-tie like this, but he certainly didn't disappear, even though he had Johnnie Wallace to battle against. The final result remains open.

West Side Man of the Match: Johnnie Wallace.
Carlaway Man of the Match: Domhnall Mackay.