

Lewis and Harris League:

# Carloway 3 (3) West Side 2 (1)

*Calum Macleod 6,7*

*Dan Crossley 18*

*Colin George Morrison (pen.) 5*

*Johnnie Wallace 85*

*Referee: Calum "Chancy" Macleod.*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich.*

*Wednesday, 27.7.11*

*Gordon Craigie*

*Darren Mackinnon Domhnall Mackay Seumas Macleod Donald "D.I." MacIennan*

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Dan Crossley Murdo "Sqweq" Macleod (capt.) Gordon "Tago" Macdonald*

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Calum Macleod*

As the pain of Saturday's dismissal receded, yet another "defining" moment presented itself to the "Golden Generation": another installment in the League title campaign, with tonight's result pivotal in each team's aspirations to enter the history books. With the Bacachs lurking in the woodshed at the bottom of the garden, which of tonight's teams would respond most effectively to that "*tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune*"?

Realistically, West Side **had** to beat Carloway to claw their way back into the race, while defeat for the Blues would hand a distinct advantage to the men from Col Uarach. There were a few enforced changes to Saturday's heroic HAC line-up. Prior commitments ruled out Andrew "Tago" Maciver (and West Side's Dan Macphail and goalkeeper Macphee); Calum Tom Moody had a knee problem, while Donnie Macphail, Archie Macdonald, and Kenny "Beag" MacIennan were unavailable. Assistant manager, Graeme "Windy" Miller was also absent, so Kevin Anderson, himself a substitute alongside Saturday's hero, David Beaton; Kevin "Barra" Macneill, called the shots.

Seumas Macleod, on-call flawless stopper, dropped back to support Domhnall Mackay; Darren Mackinnon switched right, no doubt to keep an eye on the perennially dangerous, Ali "Ostrich" Macleod, with Donald "D.I." MacIennan returning as left wing-back; the midfield became a foursome, and Calum Macleod came in to partner returnee, Kevin "Gochan" Macleod, up front in an unusually adventurous 4-4-2.

For the Siarachs, there was, thankfully for the Blues, no D.J. Clinton to partner Scott Graham in attack. Another thorn in na Gormaich's flesh, however, John Campbell, lurked in a Hidegkuti role across the mid-space between Graham and "Spike", while Colin George Morrison, defending the back-line of Campbell, Smith, Wallace and Maclean, in the Makelele position, burst forward in support whenever possible. Newcomer Connor Macdonald from Borge was to have an uncomfortable opening 20 minutes between the sticks.

And yes, the spectators were blessed with what has now become an established tradition in Carloway games: the explosive opening, although its appearance was delayed by five minutes of inconclusive sparring. On 2 minutes a flowing movement saw Mackay head clear and forward from just inside his own half to Crossley, who laid on the golden diagonal to pick out "Gochan" sweeping in on the right, but his shot from 16 metres took a slight deflection just over the bar. Two corners led to untidy scrambles and clearances, and immediately a long ball allowed John Campbell to race free on the right behind the Carloway back-line. In a rewind of Avoch's first goal in Ullapool, Campbell just tipped the ball past the out-racing Craigie before the goalkeeper's foot sent him cart-wheeling into the distance. Morrison took no prisoners by thumping the ball home, shoulder-high, to Craigie's left.

Straightaway from the kick-off, the ball was played forward by Domhnall Mackay but as Johnnie Wallace tried to head clear, it fell to Calum Macleod, facing his own goal, just outside the Siarachs' box, and as Wallace crowded, he half-turned to send a right-foot hook looping wide to an unsighted Macdonald's left, which the keeper did well to get a hand to, but couldn't prevent entering the net.

West Side restarted, lost the ball immediately, and a long ball from Mackay found Macleod ghosting at speed behind the defence, to gather the ball on the right side of the box, cut in, and sidefoot round the exposed Macdonald from 12 metres. The whole three-goal episode had taken marginally over two minutes!

The fans might have been stunned, but not the players and the customary unarmed combat which characterizes West Side derbies resumed. On 11 minutes a handball permitted Morrison to fire a trademark free-kick from 20 metres against the wall, causing the ball to spin high to the right just outside Craigie's post. On 18 minutes, a crucial minute of the game arrived: a neat move on the right witnessed the denial of a strong penalty claim for West as Scott Graham set up John Campbell to advance diagonally into the box from the right, only to be sandwiched and sent crashing by MacLennan and Mackay. The Siarachs protested; the Blues whizzed forward to win a corner on the left. No Macphail, so Crossley stepped up to the plate to send an absolute peach just inside West's left hand post, between the right-post minder and Macdonald, and the luckless keeper could only push it into the right side of his net.

West Side were slightly discomfited and Crossley surged through on the left, cut back and in, and laid off to "Dokus" in the centre, 20 metres out, who in turn freed "Gochan", sweeping in clear on the right. He checked, went square, but was unlucky to clear the bar from 20 metres. The Siarachs regained their equilibrium: on 22 minutes, a free-kick, wide on the left, midway inside the Blues' half, was rocketted across the 6-metre line by Morrison, just out of Graham's and Maclean's reach. Three minutes later a gigantic Maclean free-kick from 40 metres had to be flicked over by Craigie, before Ali Macleod managed to escape his constant shadow, Mackinnon, to cut inside, but fired just over from 20 metres.

The pace bordered on the frenetic: on the half-hour the irrepressible "Gochan" blocked a clearance midway inside West's half and sped away to the right, before supplying Macleod moving in inside him, allowing him to spin and lob from 16 metres, but his attempt went just over the bar, Nevertheless, though Graham *et al* were finding the pace and directness of "Gochan", Macleod, "Dokus" and the breaking Crossley challenging, the chances were favouring West Side. A break on the right was flicked on to Maciver but Craigie touched it over from 20 metres. The corner was cleared, came back in, was blocked again, fired back in a second time, and a fast-reacting Graham nodded past from 8 metres.

On 35 minutes a free-kick 20 metres from the bye-line, was headed past by Maclean from 12 metres, before Scott Graham shot just past Craigie's right-hand post from 18 metres. However, on 41 minutes, the Blues suddenly had the chance to kill the contest stone-dead. An exquisite "Sqweg" diagonal just inside the marker left "Dokus" to fly into the box on the right, but his shot from 16 metres was blocked superbly by Macdonald, rebounded head-high to "Dokus", but he somehow managed to head the ball outside the prone keeper's left-hand post.

Conversation at the interval centred round both sides' ability to maintain such a pace for ninety minutes. Answer? They could! The general consensus was that West Side must "*die*" early in the second half, as a consequence of Monday night's Herculean EaF triumph over Lochs. Answer: they didn't! Where they found their unending reserves of stamina remains a mystery. No doubt, everyone would like access. If anything, it was Carloway who were flat in the first half of the second period, although, at first, there was a lack of clear-cut chances for both sets of players.

On 51 minutes, Ali Macleod cut in from the left, 23 metres out, but his attempted diagonal cross, inwards to the dangerous Graham, was overhit. On 57 minutes, another break saw John Campbell overhit his supply to the charging centre. On the hour the Blues came back to life, when "Sqweg" sent a glorious de Boer diagonal inside Maclean for "Dokus" to charge in from the right but his studied attempt to place the ball saw his sidefoot shot slice over the bar. Two minutes later, the tireless Crossley won the ball in his own half, saw the West midfield opening like the Red Sea before him, and body-swerved his way better than Ronaldinho ever could through the centre at high speed, only to be body-checked by Wallace, 24 metres from goal. The resultant Mackinnon free-kick just cleared the bar. A moment later, a brilliant Donnie Smith tackle denied Calum Macleod moving in on the left, 12 metres from goal.

In the last 20-25 minutes a significant change of tactics was occurring. Defeat, by any amount, was useless for the Barvas side. The Siarachs seemed to have decided to "*go for it*", with the midfield pushing hard behind their forwards, while Gordon Campbell and Duncan Maclean were advancing dangerously down both wings. In a high-risk strategy, Johnnie Wallace and Donnie Smith had been left to mind the shop. Carloway now seemed content for the midfield to spread themselves as a holding line across a confident defence, and fire the ball forward diagonally in

front of the loosely-marked and fast-breaking "Gochan", Calum Macleod, and "Dokus", ably supported by the energetic Crossley through the centre and the increasingly troublesome "Tago", wide on the left.

On 66 minutes "Dokus" hooked over from 16 metres, before Mackay drove through the length of the park to supply "Tago" on the left. "Tago" cut back and sent a low vicious cross into the goalmouth; the ball was scrambled clear, driven back in, and in an incredible pinball-type melée, four shots were blocked, rebounded, were fired back in, and finally cleared for a corner. On 72 minutes the Blues had another opportunity to finish the job for the evening, when a flowing move down the right sent "Gochan" into the box, one-on-one, on the advancing Macdonald; he tricked his way round the keeper but was held as he moved to finish. Mackay almost snapped the top off Macdonald's left-hand crossbar as the ball shot off it and over.

On 77 minutes Macdonald was down smartly to save cleanly from 18 metres from "Gochan", before the same player sped free down the left, then supplied Macleod, 14 metres out on the left of goal, but once again Macdonald blocked bravely for a corner. On 83 minutes, West's last line of defence, Donnie Smith, failed to control a cleared ball and this permitted Calum Macleod to sprint in unhindered on goal, but from 20 metres he totally miscued his conversion high to the left.

Then, an unexpected grain of hope for the Siarachs: a Maclean free-kick, just inside the Carloway half, out on the left, came in high for Wallace to come in the centre to head strongly, high to Craigie's left, from 8 metres. However, despite, 4½ minutes added-on time, it was to prove the last clear-cut chance for either side.

Well, in an unbelievably high-paced, high-octane derby, Carloway finally crossed the finishing-line, by a ..... ? A neck? Perhaps, though not without having to look over their shoulder constantly. Though the team that scores the higher number of goals "*deserves*" to win, and Carloway had an incredible number of chances early and later in the game, West Side can identify significant moments, that, if the cards had come out differently, might have changed the course of the game; e.g. *1-2 down, the penalty claim. A moment later Carloway score, etc.etc.* Instead of being on even terms, with all to play for, a team have to spend the next 70 minutes chasing the game.

Ah, well, "*time and chance happeneth to them all*". Luck is part of the game. Carloway could probably see parallels to this line of thought in Saturday's first half. It was an extremely exciting game, refreshingly open, with each team for long periods, seemingly, on the verge of scoring. The Carloway back four had to work throughout against the elusive Scott Graham and the thoughtful ground-play and laying-off of John Campbell, with Darren Mackinnon performing wonders in keeping the endlessly inventive Ali Macleod quieter than normal; while Johnnie Wallace and Donnie Smith only struggled later on, because they were left to defend against four, sometimes, five opponents.

Domhnall Mackay answered the call, taking charge at the back, frequently pushing

forward, and ably supported by the versatile Seumas Macleod, who may, on this form, end up making this position his own. "Gochan" in this mood - lightning-fast; focussed; nomadic - can be uncontrollable, and combined with the emerging talent of Calum Macleod, and driven forward by the Blues' own *trequartista*, a Wesley Sneijder double in Dan Crossley, there is cause to be cheerful, which has not always been a widespread emotion down Carloway way, in footballing circles anyway.

[Carloway](#) Man of the Match: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod.

[West Side](#) Man of the Match: John Campbell.