

Lewis and Harris League:

**Ness 5 (3)**

*James 'Titch' Morrison 28, 29, 44, 50  
Domhnall "Cheocaidh" Smith 48*

**Carloway 5 (3)**

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 9, 47  
Calum "Caley" Macleod 11  
Andrew "Tago" Maciver 31  
Gordon "Tago" Macdonald 90+1*

*At Fivepenny.*

*Friday, 9.9.11*

*Referee; Calum "Chancey" Macleod.*

*David Beaton*

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver Calum Tom Moody Domhnall Mackay Donald "D.I." MacIennan  
Darren Mackinnon Donnie Macphail Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod (capt.) Gordon "Tago" Macdonald  
Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Calum "Caley" Macleod*

*Subs.: Chris Macleod (Donnie Macphail) 50; Kevin "Barra" Macneil (Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod) 50; Iain  
Murdo Macleod (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 79.*

After a evening like this, spectators shake their heads and wonder, "Did all that really happen? Or did someone slip a little LSD into the half-time pies?"(Worth a visit to Ness in themselves). After 20 minutes, the Blues looked as if they were going to run up a cricket score. At 3-3, it looked as if it might end 10 apiece. When Ness took a 5-4 lead, they seemed to be heading for 10; in the last five minutes the Niseach defence seemed to have departed early to the Social Club and Carloway might have scored four times. "Caley", "Gochan", and Chris Macleod ought to have scored hat-tricks; "Titch" might have scored 6!!! And Lee Johnson finished off the best move of the game brilliantly (but was three inches out!).

On the 2011 Season's last competitive day Carloway paid their first visit to Fivepenny, just as 29th August was the Blues' first, and last, call at Rally Park, Tarbert., a consequence of first round elimination from most island cups. Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald (knee) and Dan Crossley (hand) were still unfit, while Seumas Macleod, Kenny "Beag" MacIennan, and Archie Macdonald were unavailable, so Donald "D.I." Macennan and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald returned on the left defence and midfield, with Darren Mackinnon moving to right midfield for his final appearance for the club. How he will be missed ! Chris Macleod, Kevin "Barra" Macneill, and Iain Murdo Macleod returned, to join Gordon Craigie and Kevin Anderson in the bull-pen.

A rather muted aura hovered over na Gormaich tonight, a poignant feeling of unfocussed disappointment, as if the club had just been relegated to some obscure provincial pub league, instead of having achieved their highest ever League position, Runners-Up for the first time in their history, having posted a record number of League victories and Goals For.

Still, the initial exchanges were encouraging for the Blues, against a Ness back-line which seemed uncertain, not square, with the backs too forward, forcing isolated stoppers to step sideways repeatedly, causing ample space to appear on either wing and between them for pace-men "Caley", "Gochan", and "Tago" to exploit. Immediately a through ball from "Sqweg" sent "Gochan" clear centrally but his low drive from 20 metres was deflected narrowly past the left-hand post. A scramble ensued from the corner before the danger was headed away. Then Macphail sent "Caley" in on the left but a desperate tackle on the edge of the box denied him.

The signs were ominous for the Niseachs at this point, as the high back-line failed to cover space and were unsure of marking. A careful Blues' build-up across the line in 9 minutes saw Moody slip through the perfect wrecker to "Gochan" midway inside and behind the back, left of stopper, to run through unguarded space, draw the keeper, and slot home low to his right from 20 metres. Two minutes later "Gochan" in the centre circle played back rightish to Mackinnon, who emulated Moody's pass, this time to "Caley" moving through on the left to slip past the keeper to his right.

A record score seemed possible as Ness struggled to find a shape: in 18 minutes Macphail sent "Gochan" clear once more, but his drive was blocked. A minute later a flowing move involving "Pongo", Macphail, and Mackinnon released "Gochan" to run in and convert, but a dubious offside call ruled it out. On 26 minutes the romp continued when yet another delightful Moody through ball found "Tago" advancing unhindered behind the line but, one-on-one, the goalie second-guessed him brilliantly to block low to his right.

It was fateful two minutes later a Ness break on the right saw the ball played across the 18-metre line and a snap right-footer from James Morrison surprised Beaton to his right; he got an arm to it, low, but it spun up into the roof, then back, of the net. On Ness's next attack, again on the right, a throw-in won 20 metres from the goal-line came in high and Morrison got the slightest of touches to deceive Beaton on the drop at the near post and send the ball bouncing home high, between post and keeper. Two minutes later, it was 3-2 to Carloway, when the ball was played along the back-line for "Pongo" to burst forward on one of his trademark runs, deep into the Ness half centrally, one-two with "Gochan", before squeezing the ball home from 12 metres off the unlucky keeper's left arm. Three goals in three minutes!

Strangely, the Blues' centre now began to disappear as a pacy Niseach midfield, supplied by ballwinner Cheocaidh and playmaker Campbell, surged. However, the final ball kept letting them down: on 34 minutes Johnson shot past; then a Morrison turn and shot from 20 metres was safely held. An Angie Campbell free-kick from 22 metres crept past, before Carloway replied with a "Caley" corner on the left which led to a "Tago" header being headed off the line. One minute from half-time, groan-time once more for the Blues: another Morrison snap-shot from the edge of the box seemed safely held by Beaton above his head, then dropped behind him to bounce home.

Where this all might end was unpredictable: both defences were floundering, unable to deny space or combat pace; Ness's midfield was energetic but unfocussed, Carloway's non-existent, while both attacks ran free at will. Right away, the best move of the contest went unrewarded. Ness won the ball in defence, on the right. A rapid switch to central midfield saw the ball returned fast to Lee Johnson breaking into the Carloway half on the right. A fast return forward into the centre saw an exquisite reverse pass find him racing on into the Carloway box on the right. He drew Beaton perfectly, then scoop-lobbed the ball over him from 16 metres, and over the bar, when it looked in! What a goal that would have been! One to rival Cheocaidh's incredible up-and-under against the Blues in 2009!

Immediately Carloway broke free through the middle, rightish, and "Caley" supplied "Gochan" beautifully to race in and stroke home from 16 metres to the keeper's left. One minute later it was all-square again when a Niseach corner on the left was met 8 metres out in front of goal by Cheocaidh, climbing highest in a ruck of players, to nod down carefully just inside the Carloway right-hand post. From the kick-off Carloway lost the ball on the edge of the Ness area. It was played forward rapidly to

the Niseach midfield, then moved on at speed between right and centre for Morrison, just inside the Blues' half, to race in from the left across "Pongo" and behind Mackay and gather, carry forward and stroke home from 20 metres, low to the advancing Beaton's right hand. Another three goals in three minutes!

Na Gormaich now had to chase the game and abandoned all caution - and shape - to attack; but the pace of the Ness breaking, through midfield and on either wing - amplified by the arrival of the formidable Sam Macsween - continually threatened. Fortunately for the Blues, their finishing did not match the outfield play. On 68 minutes Chris Macleod was played through the centre; "Gochan" supplied the wall-pass, but Macleod's drive from 20 metres went straight at the keeper.

On 79 minutes Macsween escaped Mackay down the right but rocketted over from 18 metres, before "Tago", likewise, got away on the Carlway left but his sweeping cross-shot was scrambled away off the line for a corner. Moody rose to head the resulting corner just wide. The game seemed over when a sudden raft of chances dropped on the Blues in injury-time. A "Pongo" run once more took him into the heart of the Ness defence, where he supplied the perfect diagonal behind the defender for "Tago" to finish perfectly with a superb low cross-shot from 16 metres on the left across the keeper and just inside the far post.

A minute later the ball came to "Caley", running into the box from the right, but his shot from 12 metres was blocked for a corner. The corner bobbled along the Ness goal, 6 metres out, to Mackinnon but he somehow stabbed the ball outside the Niseach left-hand post. Right on the whistle a long ball found an unmarked Chris Macleod rushing into the Niseach box but he contrived to whack the ball against the keeper from 12 metres, and wide.

A weird night all told where Ness came very close to blowing away that tiresome mantra, "*Carlway haven't lost to Ness since ...*" decisively, yet, at the same time, Carlway could equally have succeeded in inflicting serious pain on their opponents instead. Perhaps a draw was a fair result. Both sides had multiple weaknesses on the night, only one or two strengths. Ness didn't settle on a consistent defensive formation throughout, and though Angie Campbell and Cheocaidh fought hard to establish a channelled pattern out of defence to midfield, then release the front-runners, with Morrison and Johnson repeatedly on the move, it was basically pace that created the chances. A job for the close season: practise shooting.

Carlway had a night to forget: at best, this uncharacteristically inept performance, which evinced a persistent lack of touch and tactical nous, was a reflection of a general sense of distraction permeating the squad. At worst, it demonstrated an arrogant contempt for the boys of Ness, as if the hard work was over last week versus Back, and that a match against the likes of Ness was simply a footnote, an afterthought to a season already completed. A worrying note for the Blues was the ease with which the fast breaks out of the Niseach midfield resulted in the Carlway back men so often left well behind in the slipstreams of fast-breakers like Morrison and Macsween. The absence of Dan Crossley and Seumas Macleod left a gaping hole in midfield and this meant that "Tago" had to drop back repeatedly to gather, then run, Mackinnon to lie well back. This left "Gochan" and "Caley" to run at the opposing defence, unsupported, and though frequently successful in creating space and chances, concerted build-up was rare.

**Ness** Man of the Match: James "Titch" Morrison.

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