

Jock Stein Cup Round 2:

## **Carloway 2 (0) Lochs 0 (0)**

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 74*

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 76*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich.*

*Monday, 21.5.12.*

*Ref.: Allan Iain Macleod.*

*David Beaton*

*Ali "Tolsta" Maciver Seumas Macleod Domhnall Mackay(capt.) Donald "D.I" MacIennan*

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Donnie Macphail Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod Dan Crossley*

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod? Scott Macaulay*

*Subs.: Kevin "Barra" Macneil (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 84; Ben Smith (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 90+4*

*Yellow cards: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 45.*

Perhaps not one's opponents of choice after Friday night's draining triumph over the wind and the Rubhachs at Garrabost, but when squad spirit is rampant, the defence is watertight, and a winning run is ongoing, why not confront the reigning Cup holders and one of the early League front-runners? Bring them on!

Confidence was high and it was essential to maintain the Blues' current momentum, in view of the crucial HAC meeting next Saturday in Linacleit against another bad dream from the past, lochdar Saints. Victory there delivers entry to the first open round of the trophy. However, the omens for this evening were not propitious.

This was already the teams' second collision this season, both at Cnoc a' Choilich, and the first had not left the Blues with fond memories, having suffered their only reverse thus far in this league campaign. Driven by an unrelenting nor' easterly, the men from Leurbost had dominated the first half straight from the whistle, secured an early lead, should have added more, then dropped out of sight in the second as Dan Crossley, Seumas Macleod, "Tago", and "Gochan" finally managed to get an edge and push back Peter and Robert Mackenzie, Angie Campbell, and David Macmillan, but did not manage to rescue the match, mainly due to the absence of any threatening presence in the opposition box.

So, both sides had something to think over from that April evening. Also, tonight the inspirational Gus Maciver had to call off just before kick-off due to continuing sickness, the same ailment which had earlier in the day ruled out Calum "Caley" Macleod. Andrew "Tago" Maciver was still off island and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald and Calum Tom Moody will be unavailable through injury for a considerable period. The conundrum was solved by Seumas Macleod moving sideways beside Domhnall Mackay; Ali "Tolsta" Maciver taking his right wing/back berth; Dan Crossley moving along the midfield to "left half", and Donnie Macphail starting between "Dokus" and "Sqweg".

On the plus side for Carloway, Robert Mackenzie did not start, due to a knee injury, but all the other usual suspects that the boys in blue love so much glared down the park at na Gormaich, including a bright new débutante between the sticks, one Gordon Craigie, replacing the absent Cameron Houston.

Does George Spy prepare the pitch specially for Carloway v. Lochs games? On an astonishingly pleasant evening, in front of a huge crowd, Cnoc a' Choilich might have passed quite easily for Wembley as, once again, Lochs knocked Carloway off-balance with their trademark kick-off run down the park from the whistle. It almost worked. The ball was booted clear on Carloway's left, midway within their own half. A quick throw-in found Angie Campbell unmarked, moving into the box behind the line, rightish, but faced by a rushing Beaton he spoon-footed a left-foot shot over the bar. What a start that would have been. Only thirty seconds on the clock!

A gigantic sigh went up from the crowd as Carloway took up the challenge gratefully. On 3 minutes a Crossley corner on the right was a shade too high for Mackay but "Dokus" returned from the left and Seumas Macleod flicked it back and up on to the outside junction of bar and post before it was scrambled away. Three minutes later Ali "Tolsta" set up another "Dokus" run and his low squared cross flew across the six-metre line with no takers, and then came another amazing let-off for the Blues.

On 13 minutes, a "Nomie" free-kick was caught by the wind and Beaton palmed away under his bar for a corner on his right. The next corner was palmed away left. A third corner came over like lightning head-high, was headed down and in, miraculously blocked by Beaton, rebounded in, came back off the line, hit a Lochs man, and shot past out of play. All at the speed of light. Wow!

The tempo ratcheted up, as did the tempers - and the tackling. Where reputation is at stake, there's plenty to compete for, especially among young men. On 23 minutes, a grinding "Sqweg" block tackle in the centre of the park saw his trademark diagonal release of "Dokus" on the right, who in turn fed Macaulay, then onwards it went to Macphail, but his drive from 12 metres on the left found side-netting. On the half-hour a Crossley corner was nicked off Mackay's head by Craigie, and his clearance initiated a break by "Nomie" but his flick from 20 metres leftish was held by Beaton. A minute later a Crossley run and slipped pass allowed "Sqweg" to drive from 25 metres, a nasty deflection causing the ball to bend awkwardly en route to Craigie before he held it at the second attempt.

The chances were now favouring Carloway in number but the best went Lochs' way. On 33 minutes an Ali "Tolsta" corner on the right was headed just past Craigie's left-hand post by Macaulay, before the half wound down with two near things from Lochs. On 42 minutes a corner on the right broke out to Peter Mackenzie on the left outside the box, but his rocket drive flew wide of Beaton's far left-hand post. In injury-time, a powerful Graeme Mackenzie free-kick from the halfway line dropped right in on David Beaton like a Cruise

missile, but under extreme pressure from two intruding Lochs forwards, he managed to push the ball to safety.

After all that nerve-tingling excitement, the spectators certainly needed their hot pies and Bovril, whether the players did or not. It had been an engrossing 45 minutes, an excellent advertisement for Island football, with the balance endlessly shifting, one way, then the other. And it did not slacken. Both sides knew there could only be one winner, yet both deserved victory.

On 50 minutes, a nasty Macaulay free-kick 22 metres out rightish, beat the wall but was palmed over by Craigie. Six minutes later Macmillan broke and ran through the centre into the Carloway half, freed "Nomie" who reprised vintage "Nomie" with his Wiltord spin left and round, carrying the ball like Gianni Rivera to the edge of the box, to chip upwards to beat Beaton but the keeper had read the script and held. Then, suddenly, Carloway's best chance of the evening: the increasingly troublesome "Gochan" was hacked down 24 metres out and the sweetest of Crossley free-kicks, à la original Luis Suarez, flew in for Scott Macaulay to head low inwards on the left from 8 metres, but, unbelievably, Gordon Van Der Sar got his right foot to it and it was beaten away.

Carloway were now edging it, the goal-scoring opportunities, and forcing it, especially down the right. A "Tolsta" free-kick, 25 metres out on the right broke to "Gochan" but his strike flew straight to Craigie, then "Tolsta" immediately broke down the right but his cross was too strong and flew over. However, it certainly wasn't one-way traffic. On 70 minutes the irrepressible "Nomie" shot past, before the decisive six minutes of the tie dropped on us.

On 72 minutes a "Nomie" corner on the left was met at the far post, 6 metres out, by Angie Campbell, who headed down strongly and straight but the ball somehow crept past just outside Beaton's left-hand post. Did it go through the net? Immediately Carloway broke down the left. The ball was slipped back to Macaulay on the touchline, and his deep low squared cross, 20 metres from the bye-line, found "Dokus" on the right. This time he jinked square inside his marker and unleashed a low, ferocious left-foot shot just inside Craigie's left-hand post. Craigie anticipated but it was too well-placed and struck to stop.

Hardly had the teams drawn breath when the Blues broke once more, this time on the right. "Dokus" stayed outside this time, crossing high from the touchline across goal, where "Gochan" outjumped the pack at the far post to send a powerful looping reverse header over Craigie and inside his left-hand post.

That wasn't the end of it, though - how could it be? - with a team like Lochs around. A quick goal, maybe, was still possible, of course. Then, remember Manchester City? But it was the end of the clear-cut chances. On 89 minutes Macaulay set up "Barra" but he shot just over a metre inside the box. Then deep in injury-time a nasty Macmillan free-kick from 22 metres tested Beaton without success.

Certainly the fans got their money's worth this evening; the Doune Braes

must have been packed afterwards. Two quality sides in unremitting aggressive mode throughout in their quest for victory. Until the whistle blew in the 95th minute, despite Carloway's two-goal cushion, the result remained in doubt, with several outstanding individual displays shining through the overall excellence of the night.

Peter Mackenzie provided the Maroons' drive up the right; David Macmillan and Angie Campbell the imagination in the centre, while Graeme and Peter (Junior) Mackenzie were faultless, severely limiting the Blues' right-on chances; not an easy task considering "Gochan's" Henry-type ducking, diving, and bursts of pace; the weight and directness of Macaulay; and "Dokus" in Garrincha form on the right. Scarcely missed were "Tago", "Pongo", and Robert Mackenzie, or even Andy Murray, as Ali "Tolsta" performed admirably on his *début* start, and Lochs, like Dr. Who, appear to be already regenerating, preparatory to their next period of dominance.

Calum Mackinnon probably had the most difficult role, facing the interminably elusive Dan Crossley, who manifested yet another item in his growing bag of tricks: the Dugarry bring-down of the high ball with a single instep touch; the invitation to the arriving marker to commit, to lunge; then the second touch flick and dance round the unfortunate opponent's other side as if on a ballroom floor.

And "Nomie"? What can you add to a description of "Nomie" that hasn't been said so often before? Domhnall Mackay, Seumas Macleod, David Beaton, and "D.I." did not put a foot wrong, but how they must hate this guy. They all probably have an imitation doll of him at home, to stick pins in. His name must be bracketted with Scott Maciver's, as joint Carloway Enemy Number 1. There is no doubt that, if both sides can replicate this form consistently, they will be slugging it out on the final day of the season for the title.

Lochs Man of the Match: Peter Mackenzie.  
Carloway Man of the Match: Dan Crossley.