

Lewis and Harris League:

Carloway 3 (3) United 2 (1)

Andrew 'Tago' Maciver 7

Craig Maclean 34, 53

Donnie Macphail 10

Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod 18

Referee: D J Maclean

At Cnoc a Choilich

Monday 9.7.12

David Beaton

Andrew 'Tago' Maciver Seumas Macleod Gus Maciver Donald 'DI' MacIannan

Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod Domhnall Mackay (Capt.) Donnie Macphail Dan Crossley

Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod

Subs: Andy 'VP' Macleod (Donald 'DI' MacIannan) 13, Calum Tom Moody (Andrew 'Tago' Maciver) 13, David Macleod (Andy 'VP' Macleod) 72, Ben Smith, Paul Forster

Carloway's recorded their third victory in succession with a narrow 3-2 victory over Stornoway United at Cnoc a Choilich. However, the success may have come at a cost as the Blues faced more injury concerns following the match. This was the second encounter between the sides this season. In the first meeting at Goathill Park in mid May, the Wasps took an early lead and, but for a last ditch tackle by Gus Maciver, would have been further ahead, before Carloway struck back to eventually win 4-1.

With two wins under their belts, after hopefully consigning the mid season slump to history, Na Gormaich would have been confident going into this fixture. The Stornoway side were unable to call on the services of any of the three 'natural' goalkeepers on their books, and had sought a postponement of this fixture on account of their predicament. Midfielder Calum Campbell was entrusted with the goalkeeping duties for the visitors, in the absence of their more experienced custodians. It must also be said, that United should not be taken lightly and had beaten the Blues as recently as 2010, when an 8-4 mauling was administered.

The Anderson-Miller management team was boosted by the return of Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod and Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald, both of whom missed the match on the previous Friday. They were both drafted into the starting line-up, taking the places of Ali 'Tolsta' Maciver and Billy Anderson, and were the only changes to the side. There was a further boost for Na Gormaich with the return of Calum Tom Moody, after an injury sustained playing for Stornoway RFC. He took his place on the substitutes bench.

Following his goal scoring exploits on Friday, many may have been expecting to see Andrew 'Tago' Maciver continue in an advanced role. Instead, he started in the right back berth. Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald and Kevin 'Gochan' formed the striking partnership.

It was a good night for a game of football. The evening was dry and calm, if a little dull. There was a slight breeze, just enough to keep the dreaded midges

out of range.

As in their previous outing, Carloway started the match playing towards the James Street end, and immediately set about exploiting any weaknesses the Wasps may have had. In the sixth minute, Murdo 'Squeg' sent an inviting diagonal ball out towards Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald, who won a corner on the right. The flag kick was delivered into the crowded box and could only be cleared for another corner by Calum Campbell, this time on the Carloway left. Donnie Macphail's kick was knocked towards the centre of the goal and Andrew 'Tago' Maciver pounced to head the ball into the net to give Carloway an early lead.

Three minutes later, it was 2-0 to Carloway after a Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod free kick from half way could only be punched half-clear by Campbell under pressure from Carloway players. The loose ball was tucked away smartly by Donnie Macphail with a crisp right foot shot.

The Carloway faithful would have been pleased with this opening phase of the match and building up a healthy lead, particularly in light of the team having to battle back from two goal deficits in recent matches. However, the team was dealt a double blow in the 13th minute when both full backs, Andrew 'Tago' Maciver and DI MacIennan, signalled to the bench that their involvement in the match was at an end. Maciver pulled up as he sought to burst down the right wing and suffered a hamstring injury which is likely to keep him out of action for some weeks. DI MacIennan took a knock to the quadricep and the injury is hopefully not too severe. Their places were taken by the returning Calum Tom Moody at right back, and Andy 'VP' Macleod who went to left back.

In the sixteenth minute, Craig Maclean was in an advanced position wide left and hooked the ball first time. It bounced off the top of the Carloway bar and over to safety. Then the home side's Dan Crossley embarked on one of several mazy runs displaying good close control and strength on the ball. This was followed by an intelligent defence-splitting pass by Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald for Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod to run on to. Macleod collected the ball and drove to a more central position and stroked it low past Calum Campbell and inside the left hand post for a 3-0 lead after 18 minutes.

Na Gormaich appeared to have the game won already and the Wasps' heads seemed to drop as a result of the home side's dominance. Carloway may have been determined to emulate the six goals they scored on Friday and excellent interplay between Domhnall Mackay and Dan Crossley resulted in the former having a strike on goal, deflected over for a corner. From the corner, Calum Campbell then saved well from Donnie Macphail.

At the other end, Stuart 'Bubble' MacDonald showed good skill and determination as he headed towards the Carloway goal. It forced Gus Maciver to concede a corner in making a fine defensive block.

In the 25th minute, Dan Crossley gathered the ball from just inside the United

half and embarked on another of his now trademark runs at the opponent's goal. Once he got to the edge of the box, his shot was touched past by Calum Campbell. Shortly afterwards, Donnie Macphail played it to Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod who played a nice return ball, before Macphail drew the defender and beat him, only to screw his shot wide of the target.

It seemed only a matter of time before the Blues extended their lead, however, there was a dramatic twist in the 28th minute of the match. A long ball was played out of the United defence for Gordon Maclellan to chase. He outpaced the home defence and keeper David Beaton came out to meet him right at the edge of the box. The United striker went tumbling after contact from Beaton. Referee Maclean immediately blew for a foul. There were two questions requiring answered as everyone in the ground held their collective breath. Was it inside or outside the box and what colour of card would the referee show Beaton?

In the end, the decisions were to award United a free kick just outside the box and send Carlway's Beaton off for an early shower, for denying a clear goalscoring opportunity. The merits of these decisions could be debated long and hard after the dust has settled on this match, and will inevitably be influenced by the team you follow. The writer's initial reaction was that the incident may have taken place inside the Carlway box, and that a yellow card would have been sufficient punishment for Beaton, as Gus Maciver had dashed back to provide cover. That said, he is not a qualified official and acknowledges that he usually sees things from a distinctly blue perspective. As ever, the referee is the sole arbiter and it is his decisions that matter.

Calum Tom Moody took over between the sticks for the departing Beaton, as Carlway had to reorganise once again. The resultant United free kick sailed harmlessly over the bar.

With United now enjoying the numerical advantage, their players seemed reinvigorated. In the 34th minute, they pulled a goal back when Craig Maclean latched on to a ball in the inside left position and lifted it over the advancing Moody and in to the empty net for 3-1.

The Blues were still competing well and managed to create a couple of opportunities at the end of the first half. Firstly, Domhnall Mackay drove forward and received a good return ball but was shepherded out towards the right corner flag. He still managed to play in the onrushing Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald, who couldn't trouble the goalkeeper with his shot over the bar. Then, Dan Crossley played in Donnie Macphail, who chased his own nod on towards goal. Calum Campbell sensed the danger and came off his line to gather.

Half time score: Carlway 3 United 1.

Into the second half, and Carlway had the dilemma of whether to protect the lead they had generated, or try to kill the game off with a fourth goal. Given the number of creative midfielders and strikers within their ranks, they were

unlikely to adopt a 'catenaccio' approach for the remaining 45 minutes.

Early in the second period, Kevin 'Gochan' leapt and headed on to Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald who drove forward and unleashed a good, low shot which was saved by the keeper's legs.

After 53 minutes, United won a corner which wasn't cleared by the home defence and Stuart 'Bubble' MacDonald got a shot away which was blocked. However, almost immediately, United striker Gordon MacLennan in a central position played in Craig Maclean on the left side of the box and Maclean shot across Moody and into the net to make the score 3-2. It was anyone's game now.

Carloway responded to this setback and it was Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod's turn to go on a driving solo run at the visitor's defence. Having made it inside the United box, he was challenged by the keeper, and could have gone to ground but, to his credit, stayed on his feet and was taken wide of the goal. He was eventually crowded out and the opportunity was gone.

Twenty minutes into the second half and a robust challenge from United's No. 6 David, left Andy 'VP' in a heap on the ground. The referee saw nothing amiss with the challenge and waved play on. Gus Maciver came to the home side's rescue again with a good clearance. Andy 'VP' lasted for a few minutes before having to be replaced by David Macleod, the third enforced substitution of the evening for Na Gormaich.

In the latter stages of the match, the play swung from end to end as both sides clearly had plenty to play for. In 73 minutes, Dan Crossley embarked on a mesmerising run from his own half. He withstood some desperate tackling, was knocked off the ball, regained possession and progressed towards the United goal even managing to get a shot in. Then Seumas Macleod played a nice pass down the right wing to Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod, whose cross was palmed over the bar by Calum Campbell.

The Blues created further chances in the last few minutes as United were thwarted by a determined Carloway rearguard. Kevin 'Gochan' gathered a throw in on the left and made for goal. His shot across the face of the goal was scooped clear at the back post. In injury time, his persistence enabled him to get the better of David Maciver and proceed to the bye line. An inviting cut back was presented to David Macleod, but his effort was sclafted wide.

So, a narrow but deserved win for Carloway in the end. Having raced into a 3 goal lead early in the match, they had to dig in for spells to ensure the victory. Remarkably, this was the third time in the past four seasons that Carloway have been reduced to ten men when playing United. On the previous two occasions, the matches were lost so Carloway will be heartened by the character shown by the team in securing the a positive result. United will be disappointed that they couldn't complete the comeback and claim at least a point. Whilst they competed well after a nightmare start, they would have liked to have examined Calum Tom Moody's goalkeeping credentials a little

further.

Man of the match – Dan Crossley.