

Eilean an Fhraoich Cup First Round, First Leg:

Harris 1 (1)

Zander Young 48

Carloway 4 (3)

Dan Crossley 10, 18, 58

Gordon MacLennan 39

Referee: Allan Iain Macleod

At Rally Park, Tarbert

Friday 13.7.12

Gordon Craigie

Cameron 'Tiger' Macarthur Domhnall Mackay (Capt) Seumas Macleod Chris 'Christy' Smith

Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod Donnie Macphail Billy Anderson Dan Crossley

Gordon MacLennan

Subs: Calum 'Dola' Morrison (Dan Crossley) 61, Calum Iain Macleod (Chris 'Christy' Smith) 64, Paul Forster (Billy Anderson) 90+1

Friday 13th, and Carloway travelled to Tarbert for the second time this month. On their previous visit, the Blues were on league duty and ended up with a 3-3 draw in an incident-packed match featuring three penalties and a red card. Since that last match, The Blues had gone on to record three straight victories and score 13 goals in the process.

Tonight's match was the opening leg of the Eilean an Fhraoich Cup, which is regarded by many as the most prestigious of the local cup competitions, given the eligibility criteria each player must satisfy in order to represent his district.

The draw paired Carloway with the surprise winners of the trophy in 2011. Whether their success was expected or not, it provided ample warning that the match could not be taken lightly. Indeed, the record in matches against Harris in this competition does not make pretty reading for those of a Blue persuasion. Since re-entering the league set up in 1978, Na Gormaich had failed to record a single victory against the men from the Southern part of the long island. Four two-legged encounters as well as the 1999 final all went the way of Harris.

Ineligible for consideration were David Beaton, Ali 'Tolsta' Maciver, Gus Maciver, Calum Tom Moody and Kevin 'Gochan' Macleod. Recent injuries to Andrew 'Tago' Maciver and Donald 'DI' MacLennan meant they too would be unavailable. To compensate for this, Kevin Anderson and Graeme 'Windy' Miller were able to call on the services of Stornoway United teenagers Gordon MacLennan and Calum 'Dola' Morrison.

Na Gormaich opened with a compact 4-5-1 formation. Cameron 'Tiger' Macarthur came into the side for his debut at right back. Alongside him, Domhnall Mackay dropped back to form a centre half pairing with Seumas Macleod, and Chris 'Christy' Smith got the nod at left back. In the midfield, the

three men in the engine room were Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod, Donnie Macphail and Billy Anderson, with Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald and Dan Crossley continuing to provide the width on the right and left wings respectively as well as supporting the striker. Gordon MacIennan, who had impressed against Carloway four days earlier, was handed his Carloway debut and was given the main striking role.

The continuing good weather ensured it was another fine evening for a game, and the Blues began the match playing towards the school end, as they had done on their last visit to Rally Park. In the opening minutes both teams were settling into the match and few chances were created. In the 8th minute, Cameron 'Tiger' Macarthur fed the ball to Billy Anderson who tried to find Gordon MacIennan with a quick through ball but it was intercepted.

The breakthrough was made shortly afterwards after Donnie Macphail was fouled in the midfield. Billy Anderson lofted an inviting free kick into the box right of centre where it was met by Dan Crossley's close range header which beat Iain Mackay to give Carloway an early 1-0 lead. Unfortunately, Mrs Crossley was still setting up the video camera at this point, so may have missed her son's opener!

Gordon Craigie was making a welcome return to the side for this competition and got in on the action with a good claim from a potentially dangerous free kick for Harris. Then young Harris striker Mikey Paton managed to nip in ahead of the keeper but lifted his shot over the bar.

In the 13th minute, Chris 'Christy' Smith played a square ball to Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod who played an excellent searching diagonal pass right towards Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald. He had to be content with winning a corner. The resultant flag kick was close to being converted by Seumas Macleod's header.

Harris tried to get back into the game and although did well Paton in managing to get round Domhnall Mackay, Seumas Macleod provided cover for the Blues. Then, Benn Esslemont took a throw in on the left to John Sutton who laid it off to Mikey Paton, though the shot was well charged down and blocked by Domhnall Mackay.

With 18 minutes on the clock, Carloway doubled their lead after persistent play from Donnie Macphail on the Harris touchline allowed him to find Gordon MacIennan in the box. MacIennan fed Dan Crossley who flicked it home for 2-0 to Carloway.

The hosts went straight on the attack and almost snatched a goal back, although Gordon Craigie made an excellent save with his right foot. Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald was on hand at the near post to clear for another. In Harris' next attack Ali Morrison played in Kyle Macleod, whose shot managed to clear the fence and almost reached West Loch Tarbert, before being retrieved.

Crossley was stamping his authority on the match and a fine piece of improvisation saw him scoop the ball over the Harris defence for Gordon Maclellan. Unfortunately, the flag was raised for offside.

After 23 minutes, a long ball up the park by Harris was met by Seumas Macleod, but was only partially cleared. As he and Mikey Paton were battling for the loose ball, in came Chris 'Christy' Smith to tackle strongly and call on Gordon Craigie to gather smartly.

With just over half an hour played, Smith then initiated a Carloway attack when he played a nice long ball towards the willing runner Gordon Maclellan. Although he gathered well, he knew he would be unable to get a shot in, so laid it off to Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald. The shot from the edge of the box was blocked.

Kieran Mulhearn had his name taken by the referee for a foul on Dan Crossley after 35 minutes. Perhaps not the most malicious of fouls, although the card may well have been issued for multiple indiscretions. Mulhearn and his team mates were struggling to cope with the incisive runs and tenacity of Crossley and he may well have claimed "I got there as soon as I could."

Mikey Paton managed to create another opportunity for John Sutton who was coming in from the right. Sutton's shot across goal did not trouble Craigie. Then Donnie Macphail had the ball near the right corner. He managed to turn his opponent and passed to the supporting Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald at the right corner of the box. He looked up and crossed with his left foot towards Dan Crossley who was lurking on the 6 yard box, although Iain Mackay came out to claim the ball.

Then, with 39 minutes played, Carloway were in again when a superb ball from Donnie Macphail allowed Gordon Maclellan a clear sight of goal. Maclellan kept his cool and lifted the ball over Iain Mackay for an excellent finish and 3-0 lead for the visitors. Immediately afterwards, Dan Crossley broke on the left wing and managed to get a cross in for Gordon Maclellan, who shot over.

Half time score: Harris 0 Carloway 3

In the second half, Dan Crossley immediately embarked on another mazy run but he was eventually crowded out of it at the edge of the Harris box. Then, three minutes into the half, Harris were awarded a disputed free kick when Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod was adjudged to have raised his feet dangerously when trying to clear the ball. A Harris player had tried to challenge him from the blind side and stooped towards the ball. Zander Young placed the ball left of centre approximately 30 yards from goal and proceeded to curl a sweet right foot free kick over the wall and into Craigie's top right hand corner. It was an excellent finish from Young, and reduced the deficit to 3-1.

In the 53rd minutes, Cameron 'Tiger' Macarthur, who gave an assured performance throughout, played a nice ball out to Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald

on the right wing. He provided a sweet cross straight on to the head of Billy Anderson, whose effort went narrowly over. Then young Macarthur won the ball in midfield and found Gordon MacIennan haring down the right. He got a cross in towards goal for Dan Crossley, whose shot was partially blocked for a corner.

Eleven minutes of the second half had elapsed when Harris had the ball in the net after John Sutton's excellent finish, and everyone in blue breathed a sigh of relief when it was ruled out for offside. This decision was hotly disputed by the home fans and was difficult to call either way. Two minutes later another offside decision went against the home team and their frustration grew, as they were made to pay, as Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod took the free kick centrally about 25 yards from the Carloway goal. The beautifully flighted ball found Dan Crossley at the edge of the Harris box. Crossley was trying to find a way through to goal and appeared to have lost the opportunity with his back to goal and defenders in close attendance. However, he delivered the 'coup de grâce' by deftly back-heeling the ball past the bemused defenders and the outrushing goalkeeper in to the net off the post, to complete his hat trick in style and give Na Gormaich a 4-1 lead.

Minutes after this, and with an hour played, Dan Crossley was withdrawn and Calum 'Dola' Morrison given his Carloway debut. Crossley had been excellent and was perhaps being given a well-earned rest having been involved throughout the recent glut of matches. Shortly afterwards, John Sutton had a great chance to reduce the deficit again, but he sclafted his effort wide of Craigie's right hand post. Then Carloway made their second substitution when Calum Iain Macleod replaced the tiring Chris 'Christy' Smith. Harris also introduced James Maclean into the fray on the left side of the park.

In the 68th minute, Gordon MacIennan continued his fine display with a smart turn which drew a foul right on the edge of the box. Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald fired over from the free kick.

Harris pushed for a second goal and James Maclean curled a shot which was on target but comfortable for Gordon Craigie, after good build up play from Mikey Paton and John Sutton. Back came Carloway and Calum Iain Macleod knocked a good ball on Donnie Macphail but his shot was well blocked by Iain Mackay.

With seven minutes remaining, a great cross from the right by the Harris No. 7 was met by Mikey Paton whose header struck the bar. Seumas Macleod was on hand to clear the danger. It was tough on Paton, who played very well and was a constant threat. Then James Maclean passed inside from the left to Kyle Macleod, whose good shot brought out an excellent save by the alert Gordon Craigie low to his left.

With time running out, the Carloway youngsters Cameron 'Tiger' Macarthur and Gordon MacIennan showed a good understanding with neat interplay that deserved a more tangible reward.

Na Gormaich will be pleased to have generated a healthy lead from this match which leaves them well placed to progress to the semi finals, where Ness await. The Blues ran out worthy winners on the night, although they will realise that had the offside Harris goal stood with the score at 3-1, the complexion of the match could have been altered. Anderson and Miller will be impressing on the players that the job is only half done as yet, and they must apply themselves in the same manner again in order to ensure progression in the competition at the expense of the holders.

It was encouraging to see youngsters Cameron 'Tiger' Macarthur and Gordon Maclennan start this match and fully justify their inclusion with strong performances, along with Calum 'Dola' Morrison who was given a run out in the second half. Seumas Macleod continues to impress in the heart of the defence. On another day, any one of these players could have laid a claim on man of the match, but Dan Crossley must win the award, not only for his scoring exploits, but his strong running throughout the match

Carlway Man of the match – Dan Crossley.

Harris Man of the match – Mikey Paton