

Eilean an Fhraoich Cup First Round, Second Leg:

**Carloway 3 (1) Harris 2 (0) (Aggregate: 7-3).**

Kenny 'Dokus' MacDonald 4      Malky Campbell 46  
Kevin 'Barra' Macneil 64      John Sutton 90+3  
Gordon MacLennan 88

Referee: Murdo Macaulay  
At Cnoc a' Choilich  
Monday 16.7.12

Gordon Craigie

Cameron 'Tiger' Macarthur      Seumas Macleod      Domhnall Mackay (Capt)      Andrew 'V.P.'  
Macleod  
Calum 'Dola' Morrison      Donnie Macphail      Murdo 'Squeg' Macleod      Kenny 'Dokus'  
MacDonald      Kevin 'Barra' Macneil  
Gordon MacLennan

Subs.: Ben Smith (Calum 'Dola' Morrison) 75, Calum Iain Macleod (Donnie Macphail)75, Paul Forster (Andrew 'V.P.' Macleod) 82

Yellow Cards: Donnie Macphail 45; Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur 53.

Intriguing fixture tonight, posing unexpected problems in approach for both sides. At a glance, the tie was already dead. Or did the Hearachs seriously believe that an early goal might actually initiate a miraculous springboard into the semi-final? Cnoc a' Choilich has not exactly been a field of dreams in recent years for them, though, on the plus side, the curious exigencies of the EaF presented a few gifts to the men from the south.

Carloway were unable to call on the services of David Beaton, Calum Tom Moody, Gus Maciver, Kevin "Gochan" Macleod, and Ali "Tolsta" Maciver, while injury accounted for Andrew "Tago" Maciver, Donald "D.I." MacLennan, Dan Crossley, Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, and Scott Macaulay. No Billy Anderson, Tom Lawrence, Stuart Macdonald, or Sandy Morrison available either, although the last's younger brother, Calum "Dola", continued up front, initially on the left, with fellow United youngster Gordon MacLennan, while Western Thistle's Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur, again at right back. Stalwarts like Gordon Craigie, Andrew "V.P." Macleod, and Chris "Christy" Smith stepped forward, and young Ben Smith joined Paul Forster and Calum Iain Macleod on the bench. Despite the first-leg score and their poor season so far, the opposition could not be taken lightly as their ranks included former Blues, Iain Mackay and Benn Esslemont, and a formidable front line in wing-men, Malky Campbell and Mark Morrison, and troublesome front man, John Sutton.

An early goal was vital to Harris - and they almost got three of them! Last season was characterised by explosive openings by the Blues. Tonight the Hearachs could, perhaps should, have outdone them. From the whistle they surged forward down the right. Malky Campbell sent the ball in diagonally from 22 metres; the clearance rebounded back off a defender, then broke off a second leftwards to an unmarked striker, 16 metres out, but he managed to drag his left foot shot wide of Craigie's left-hand post. From the goal kick the

ball was returned high direct into the Blues' box. Craigie ran forward to catch, dived forward, but the ball beat him to bounce up and off his chest; a cartoonish *melée* unfolded within the area, before the ball was booted out left. Immediately it was returned into the centre and a glancing chip was clawed away for a corner on the right by the bemused keeper.

However, two minutes later came a perfect demonstration of the old sporting maxim, "*If you don't take your chances .....*". Carloway finally got forward; the ball was played centrally to "Barra" on the edge of the Harris box. He broke back off his marker, then right, and threaded a golden diagonal forward to "Dokus" on the right, and he in turn jinked back and from 16 metres curled an exquisite Norman Whitesider round Esslemont and Iain Mackay just inside the far post. No one does it better than "Dokus"! One for the scrapbook.

A calmer period of stalemate now ensued: Harris still had the balance of possession, ran and ran, but could not open Mackay and Macleod. Na Gormaich appeared happy to trade territory, then break, easy tactics if you have a 4-goal cushion. On 24 minutes Mackay had to move smartly to block twice; before delightful Wiltord trickery by "Dokus" midway into the Harris half in the centre supplied Maclennan breaking left; he got past his marker to the bye-line and his low cross was stab shot by Macphail at the near post, 14 metres out, but Mackay read it well.

Harris had to wait till the half-hour for their next real chance, but Zander Young's free-kick, 24 metres out to the right, cleared the bar. Five minutes later another free-kick right in the centre on the edge of the box was well-placed over the wall but lacked pace and Craigie had time to anticipate and held well low to his left. The game appeared now to be dying slightly as the Hearachs desperately sought a breakthrough, but Lady Fortune still favoured the Blues: on 37 minutes another neat turn by Maclennan on the edge of the box saw him abandon his marker but hook his strike low past Mackay's right-hand post. Then a "Dokus" break through the centre set up "Barra" moving in on the right but he thwacked his finish past the near post from 14 metres.

A difficult place for Harris. What words of inspiration could the manager have ready at the interval to lift the boys? No matter, the Black and Reds were to enjoy a stunning opening pick-me-up, as they did what they should have done in the opening two minutes of the game - and with a real curiosity of a goal. An initial Harris attack was repulsed and the ball half-cleared back to Malky Campbell centrally at least 35 metres out, maybe more; without hesitation he blootered a right-foot half-volley straight back. The ball skited through at pace; Craigie saw it coming all the way, moved left, perhaps over-anticipated, as the ball seemed to swerved leftwards slightly, perhaps bounced badly, and the red-faced keeper falling to his left had to flap vainly backwards at the bouncing ball as it whipped into the net. Ouch! Who was more astonished - Craigie or Campbell?

Naturally, this fired up the Hearachs. Two minutes later a free-kick from Young, 20 metres out on the left, flew past; then on 55 minutes the same player went even better, making the right-hand side of Craigie's crossbar

twang like a bow-string with a quickly taken right-foot free-kick from a similar position. Two minutes later Craigie had to move smartly to beat a shot from 20 metres away to his left, then repeat this on 61 minutes as Sutton turned to smack in a right-foot drive from the edge of the box. Harris were dogged at this stage, finally seeing Craigie in their sights, as Carloway's midfield evaporated, isolating Maclennan up front, with Campbell and Morrison giving "V.P." and "Dola" a torrid time on the wings, though their tendency to beat and turn in meant the bye-line cutback was unexploited and led them in to the strongest performing section of the Carloway line-up, Mackay and Seumas Macleod, who were faultlessly adamant and endlessly sought to kick-start the machine forward. "Dokus" and Macphail were individually creative, inventive; "Sqweg" tireless and ferocious, occasionally producing his trademark de Boer high diagonals to release on the right; but no one was co-ordinating the line, and the youngbloods, "Barra", "Dola", and Maclennan, later Ben Smith, lacked experienced direction.

On 63 minutes Craigie palmed another 20 metre drive off to the left, before, as so often happens, the team who have dropped right out of the game, scored. A Macphail corner on the right was met by an unmarked "Barra", 8 metres out by the left-hand post, to power a reverse header just inside Mackay's left-hand post. A minute later a powerful Harris drive from 22 metres whizzed just outside Craigie's left-hand post, but from there the clock inexorably started to run down. On 73 minutes a Harris break on the left saw Craigie rush to block an attempted conversion inside the box on the left; then a minute later a Maclennan cross allowed a well-placed "Dokus" to drive past from 14 metres, before Mackay palmed away a 20 metre free-kick on the left from the same player.

On 88 minutes a Carloway break out of defence saw "Dokus", just inside his own half, flight a delicate lob-pass in front of the breaking Maclennan, a metre off his marker to the right; the striker sped forward, then lifted the ball over the advancing keeper from 22 metres. Right on time yet another Young free-kick from 22 metres in the centre whistled over, before a typical Campbell run through the centre released Sutton, just inside the box, on the right, to slip the ball past Craigie's left-hand.

At this level, only a hair's breadth separates triumph and failure. The Hearachs must have been hugely disappointed tonight to walk away with nothing, as they failed to capitalize on long periods of possession and midfield control, plus territory. However, aggression doesn't necessarily equate with danger, and in the first half they didn't really threaten, though Malky Campbell and Mark Morrison sparkled throughout. Someone to fire the bullets clearly required, though John Sutton presented trouble later in the game; perhaps a dead-ball man too, as innumerable free-kick opportunities around na Gormaich's box were squandered.

Carloway lacked a cohesive impetus tonight and at times displayed a dilatory approach to proceedings, an understandably predictable game-plan to keep it tight at the back, where Mackay and Seumas Macleod scarcely broke sweat, and the rest would come naturally. And it did, with two goals arriving from

uncomplicated, but clever, moves and clinical finishes and a third from a set-piece. However, things might be slightly more difficult this Friday at Col Uarach against a Back side which increasingly seems to be THE side of this season, though, despite the younger players being up for it tonight, especially Gordon Maclennan, Carloway should have the heavy team back, hopefully including "Pongo" and Dan Crossley, but excepting the much-missed game-changers, "Tago" and Scott Macaulay.

Harris Man of the Match: Malky Campbell.

Carloway Man of the Match: Domhnall Mackay.