

Lewis and Harris League:

## **Carloway 1 (1) Point 2 (2)**

*Donnie Macphail 12*

*Andie Murray 9*

*Ali Maciver 41*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich*

*Friday, 27.7.12.*

*Ref.: Stuart Macleod*

*Ali "Tolsta" Maciver*

*Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Seumas Macleod Gus Maciver Donald "D.I." MacIennan  
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Donnie Macphail Domhnall Mackay(capt.) Murdo "Sqweg"  
Macleod Ben Smith*

*Kevin "Barra" Macneil*

*Subs.: Andrew "V.P." Macleod (Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod) 62; Chris "Christy" Smith (Kenny  
"Dokus" Macdonald) 70; David "Cirbhig" Macleod (Ben Smith) 70.*

*Yellow cards: Seumas Macleod 25.*

What a difference two months can make. The last time these two sides met, at Garrabost in May, everything was coming up roses in the Blues' garden. After an initial League stutter against Lochs (0-1) and predictable ABC exit to Athletic (0-3), na Gormaich had recorded three straight League victories versus Harris (4-1), Back (5-1), and United (4-1), and were actually looking forward to that perennially difficult encounter in Point, before cup confrontations with Lochs (in the Jock Stein) and old antagonists, lochdar Saints, in the HAC. However, that valley of joy has lately been overcast with multiple dark clouds of misery. Injury and unavailability are partially responsible for this: the talents of Gordon "Tago" Macdonald and Calum Tom Moody were already absent that evening; tonight, five of the starting line-up in May did not feature. David Beaton was suspended; Kevin "Gochan" Macleod and Calum "Caley" Macleod unavailable; and the list of injured included the irreplaceable trio of defensive powerhouse, Andrew "Tago" Maciver; inspirational playmaker, Dan Crossley; and one-man strike force, Scott Macaulay, who notched the clincher that night with a glorious burst of opportunistic aggression.

Kevin Anderson faced the tiger; why not? Young bucks, Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur and Ben Smith were blooded, at right-back and outside-left; Ali "Tolsta" Maciver returned, but in goal; Seumas Macleod and Gus Maciver were joint stoppers, while Domhnall Mackay became holding midfielder, which some claim is his best position; and Kevin "Barra" Macneil was entrusted with the glory-spot. Point had significant absences also: the redoubtable Iain Mackenzie did reprise his role in May, but Alasdair Gillies and his young helpers were missing. Unfortunately for the Blues, however, the Paddy Crerand-figure of "Rab" Maciver featured, along with major pains in the posterior, Andie Murray and Alan Macmillan in front, and at the back, the best goalkeeper on the island, Daniel MacIennan, who continued to relegate up-and-coming star, Alec Wright, to the bench.

Fortunately the sun was light and the sou'westerly mild, compared with Monday. The initial play was unremarkable, error-strewn and incident-free, as

the teams broke each other's efforts to establish a pattern with unfamiliar line-ups. Then, out of the blue, the opener: a Rubhach attack collapsed; Macleod carried the ball out of his area, did a Roger Byrne past one man, then stood on the ball as he attempted to skip a second (Andie Murray of all people!), fell, and the man in red thanked him, moved forward, rightish into the box, and clipped it clinically past Ali "Tolsta" to his right from 16 metres.

Carloway now tried to force the game, but neither side seemed close to a pattern of control. Then a "Barra" cross 18 metres out on the right helped rescue Carloway as the wind suddenly lifted it over Maclennan on his goal-line; he managed to touch it out but Ben Smith, 8 metres out, powered a header in. Miraculously, Maclennan clawed it out, but Macphail, following up, thumped it into the roof of the net from 10 metres.

Two goals in 12 minutes, yet the play hardly justified them. Neither side seemed able to establish a rhythm, a template on the game, and play was shapeless, resulting in half-chances only. On 14 minutes Mackay drove wide of Maclennan's right-hand post from 24 metres centrally and a minute later "Barra" sent the ball over from 16 metres off a Smith low cross. Moments later Ali "Tolsta" confidently held an enormous free-kick from the halfway line under pressure beneath his bar. On 26 minutes Mackenzie fed "Rab" Maciver through the centre but his attempt from 20 metres went harmlessly past his namesake's left-hand post; then, a minute later, Ali "Tolsta" reacted brilliantly to scoop the ball away from the breaking Macmillan's feet, to his right, just inside the box.

With influential playmaker, "Rab" Maciver, operating more defensively, and no symbiotic understanding between "Dokus", "Sqweg", and Donnie Macphail, it was up to Mackay to inject any life into midfield, but it was 35 minutes before Carloway troubled Maclennan again, when he had to tip over a "Sqweg" free-kick from the halfway line.

Then, again out of nowhere, another goal. A Point break on the left drew Macleod and Maciver right in support of Macarthur but they failed to close it down before a cross came through to Ali Maciver, 10 metres out in front of goal, between defenders, to control one touch with his right, then do an exquisite Bergkamp hook with his left past the helpless "Tolsta's" right hand. Carloway had two late chances to level: on 44 minutes a "Sqweg" drive from 24 metres shot past Maclennan's right-hand post, then a defence-splitter from the same player through the middle found "Dokus" beating the flag behind an advancing defence but a lunge from the rapidly-reacting Maclennan caused "Dokus" to sweep his connect outside the keeper's left-hand post from 16 metres.

It had been a difficult half for both sides; nothing had really worked, despite plenty of effort. It was mildly surprising that three goals had been scored. And it didn't get better, although Carloway tried to force it more; it took to the 57th minute before the next half-chance appeared, "Barra" nodding a Macphail corner from the right past Maclennan's right-hand post. Three minutes later a disputed free-kick on the right edge of the box led to Maclennan touching a

"Dokus" attempt from 16 metres past his right-hand post. Mackay then beat the crowd to head Macphail's corner over from 12 metres.

On 63 minutes, a skirmish in the Blues' box saw "Tolsta" react sharply to deny Macmillan from 16 metres. Kevin Anderson knew the Ranieri solution was required: "V.P." replaced "Sqweg", but went left; "D.I." joined Gus Maciver; Seumas Macleod partnered "Barra". But the chances still would not materialize; the machine was simply not working. Nor was Point's. There was no decisive figure in midfield, in either line-up, although Mackay covered acres to kickstart the Blues and Maciver tried hard to split na Gormaich's back four.

On 68 minutes a free-kick by "Dokus" on the edge of the box was blocked, then Macleod shot over from 22 metres two minutes later. Three minutes later "Cirbhig" supplied Macleod, 20 metres out centrally, but his shot went wide on the right. A melée in the box followed a corner a minute later, before being cleared, then in the 83rd minute an unbelievable rammy occurred in the Point box: a corner on the right was knocked back from 10 metres to Macleod, turning to his right to unleash a ferocious reverse right-foot drive to Maclennan's right, but the keeper defied the laws of physics to get his right hand to the thunderbolt, at full stretch, to touch it away. The ball ping-ponged around, rose outwards, and Mackay, 14 metres out in the centre, lifted it forward but it came back off the top of the bar, and was cleared. When "Barra" shot over from 20 metres in 86 minutes, the Blues knew it was not to be.

Not an outstanding evening at Cnoc a'Choilich, for either side, although, considering the extensive absence list, for varied reasons, from both sides, it is understandable. It's hard to estimate any side when at least half their performers are unavailable. It had a decidedly end-of-the-season feel, perhaps to be expected when you regard both clubs' League standings. Despite that, in a game that drifted rather than was directed, several participants recorded memorable performances. The spine of Point held them together: the reactive awareness of Daniel Maclennan; the solidity and leadership of Iain Mackenzie; the directive imagination from "Rab" Maciver; and the incisive strike-power of Andie Murray.

For Carloway, what does the remainder of the season offer? The League has gone; the EaF is different, though special (in Lewis hearts, the Cup everyone wants to win). Two Cups are all that remain. It was right to play "Tiger" and Ben in a fixture of this nature; they must find out what it is like; it's the only way to learn - and they clearly are. Setting aside the first goal, the back four were the customary gneiss-like formation, with Domhnall Mackay tireless as the shield in front of them and a driving force behind the malfunctioning midfield. Coming forward was the problem, and the attack only really looked dangerous once Seumas Macleod supported "Barra" up front.

**Point** Man of the Match: Daniel Maclennan.

**Carloway** Man of the Match: Domhnall Mackay.