

Lewis and Harris League:

## Carloway 2 (0) West Side 5 (2)

Calum Tom Moody 67, 82

Innes Iain Morrison 8

Scott Graham 29

Martin Stewart 87

Ali "Barvas" Macleod (pen.)69, 90+1

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Friday, 24.8.12.

Ref.: D.J. Maclean (Bragar).

David Beaton

Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Calum Tom Moody ☒ Darren Mackinnon Donald "D.I" MacIennan

Ali "Tolsta" Maciver Billy Anderson Donnie Macphail ☒ Murdo "Sqwegg" Macleod(capt.)  
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Dan Crossley

Subs.:Vicente Alonso (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 29, Jamie Macdonald (Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur) 45; Andrew "V.P." Macleod (Vicente Alonso) 74.

Yellow cards: Calum Tom Moody 83; Donnie Macphail 90.

Andy "Barvas" Macleod Scott Graham

D.J.Clinton ☒ Innes Iain Morrison Ali Williamson Donald "Spike" Smith (capt.) Ali "Barvas" Macleod

Campbell Macdonald Duncan Maclean Donnie "No" Smith  
Peter Macaskill

Subs.: Timmy Hunter (Donnie "No" Smith) 44; Martin Stewart (Scott Graham) 44; Murdo "Murchadh" Macdonald (Andy "Barvas" Macleod) 70.

Yellow card: D.J.Clinton 64.

The initial interest in this game, undoubtedly, was how much importance each side would attach to it. There were bragging rights at stake, of course, for ascendancy in the west, and fourth League place could be decided or thrown open by the result, but was anyone really caring who ended up in fourth league spot? Or are both sets of players like Old Firm fans, "*It doesn't matter if we win the league, as long as the other lot are beneath us!*"?

The clubs themselves might be forgiven for giving more consideration to much more vital games arriving shortly, namely, Lewis Cup Semi-Finals on Monday and Wednesday and the Coop Cup Final next Saturday evening. When the teams lined up, the aficionados' questions were immediately answered. Craig Levein probably is familiar with such scenarios when Scotland have a friendly against Rockall or the Flannan Isles; you know, someone they can beat. Suddenly clubs' treatment rooms are filled with "*injured*" players, or a whole raft of the squad are "*unavailable for personal reasons.*"

Na Gormaich were missing several stalwarts: apart from long-term absentees, Scott Macaulay and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, the injured included Domhnall Mackay (ankle); Seumas Macleod (ankle); and Gus Maciver (knee, although he wanted to risk it but was forbidden). Also, Kevin "Gochan" Macleod was at a stag night and Andrew "Tago" Maciver at the Stornoway Communion, as was West's Dan Macphail. Absent from the

Siarach line-up were Johnny Wallace and Gordon Campbell, currently in the mud at Creamfields, getting their ears blown off, Colin George Morrison, who has now headed north-east to Ness, and Martainn Shields (ankle?).

Perhaps unwisely, Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald, still carrying a nagging knee injury, and Last Action Hero, Dan Crossley, were risked. Amazingly, former star, Darren Mackinnon, now in H.M.'s service, returned beside Moody in central defence, with youth player, Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur, to their right, in what looked like a 4-4-2 formation, though positions were to change repeatedly in the course of the 90 minutes. Ali "Tolsta" Maciver, Billy Anderson, Donnie Macphail, and Murdo "Sqwegg" Macleod were strung across the middle, with "Dokus" and Crossley flitting back and forth between midfield and attack as circumstances required. The bench had an unfamiliar look to it: Barcelona "loan" star, Alonso, debuted, beside Paul Forster, Andrew "V.P." Macleod, and Jamie "Uibhisteach" Macdonald.

West's game-plan looked 3-5-2, at first anyway, with Campbell Macdonald coming into the back-line left, beside Duncan Maclean and Donnie Smith; Ali Williamson moving forward to holding midfielder; and major pain-in-the-neck, D.J.Clinton, dropping deep to the left midfield/wing. Innes Iain Morrison made a welcome start between the latter two, as did Andy "Barvas" Macleod up front beside other first-rate pests, Scott Graham, and Ali "Barvas" Macleod, the last patrolling the entire right of the field.

Like the Point game, the crowd at kick-off reflected public interest, though attendance grew considerably throughout the first half. Perhaps 6.30 p.m. starts are a bit "tight" for those who are still keeping Britain great. On a fair, but midge-infested evening, on a pitch beautifully-prepared by George Spy, the first incident of note arrived on 6 minutes. A mighty Maclean free-kick from the centre circle forced Beaton to tip the ball over his bar. Two minutes later West broke from defence through the middle; the ball was moved on rapidly to Graham, who turned the early pass diagonally left to Morrison, totally unmarked, moving into the box and, as Beaton advanced, he slipped it neatly past his right-hand and home; a simple, but well-executed goal, created through decisive tackling, early delivery forward then left, then rapid conversion. **0-1.**

On 10 minutes Crossley had the Blues' first attempt, off a Macphail assist through the centre, but it trundled harmlessly to Macaskill from 18 metres. The snatched shot reflected the dysfunctional nature of the Blues' approach so far, as West Side grabbed, and held, the initiative, through efficient, cohesive organization, with players knowing their roles, parting with the ball early, moving well off it, and reacting and tackling quickly. Not to mention leaders at the back and in midfield, and forwards who moved fast. In contrast, widespread uncertainty was evident in their rivals. As "D.J." retreated, "Tiger", lacking guidance, did not know whether or not to follow. Inevitably, Moody and Mackinnon, who seemed ill-at-ease as a duo and unsure who was to pick up whom, Graham or Andy "Barvas", were dragged right and apart, granting the best right half/winger on the island, Ali "Barvas", the freedom of Cnoc a' Choilich to create havoc. "Dokus" was clearly unfit; Dan Crossley the loneliest

man on Lewis, as he established a record for the greatest area any player can cover in 45 minutes, searching for the ball. The midfield was leaderless and struggled to gain a shape to pressure, as Morrison, Williamson, and "Spike" ran through them.

A chaotic melée in the Blues' box after 20 minutes saw a Graham drive from 16 metres deflected off Beaton's knee for a corner, before Carloway actually managed to win a corner on the left, from which Crossley's glancing header at the near post flew across goal and wide. Seven minutes later the game was already moving out of Carloway's reach: a corner on the left carried over the pack to the right bye-line, then was caught and hooked back in by Ali "Barvas". It broke off a defender by the near post, and an incredible scramble of flailing limbs occurred within the 6-metre box before Graham eventually forced it over the line. Not na Gormaich's finest hour! **0-2.**

Immediately, "Dokus" came off, Alonso appeared up front, and Crossley dropped back, but still any momentum was absent. Fiddle-faddle re-appeared in midfield; the Siarachs simply sank back, held the line, and watched, as the aimless tip-tap out of defence saw Carloway reach their midfield, play across the line, start moving backwards, and the inevitable pass-back to Beaton was booted downfield, won by West, and a swift break was on through an invisible midfield towards a stretched, disjointed defence. On 33 minutes a third goal almost arrived as an exquisite defence-splitter sent Morrison clear into the box on the right but he pulled his low shot wide of the far post. On 41 minutes a Moody miscue, midway within his own half as he retreated, was controlled beautifully by "Ostrich" on the right but his carefully-placed drive, just inside the box, was touched past the far post brilliantly by Beaton.

**Half-time: Carloway 0 West Side 2.**

The Home dressing room must have been a welcome bolt-hole for the Blues, after a truly dire first-half. Grant Hunter had even felt confident enough, just before half-time, to bring on Timmy Hunter and Martin Stewart for fixtures like Donnie Smith and Scott Graham. 'D.J.' now moved forward right of Andy "Barvas", with Hunter replacing him in left midfield, and Williamson dropping back alongside Maclean to allow Stewart to slot in centrally in midfield. The Blues now looked 4-5-1: "Tiger" was sacrificed, Jamie "Uibhisteach" becoming right wing/back; Crossley was now mainly left midfield (tracked by Cameron Macdonald) and Alonso alone up front.

Na Gormaich came out positively and with Moody pushing through midfield, a spell of pressure unfolded. On 52 minutes a nasty inswinging corner from the left by Crossley led to a stramash in the West 6-metre box, before being booted off the line for a second corner, from the same player, which was met at the near post by a Macphail head-flick which went narrowly past. On 62 minutes a trademark Crossley free-kick, just inside the Siarach half on the left touch-line, was driven over his own bar by Maclean as Moody threatened. On 65 minutes a 30-metre strike from "D.I." caused problems for Macaskill as the ball bobbed unexpectedly in front of him, before he clutched it at the second attempt. Two minutes later and we entered the three-minute period which

settled the game. A Macphail corner on the right was met by Moody forcibly at the far post, 10 metres out, but his reverse-header was deflected slightly past. A second Macphail corner reran the action, only this time, Moody's sights were calibrated perfectly and his header thundered downwards into the centre of the net. **1-2.**

But the glimmer of hope was snuffed out cruelly moments later when a swift break by the Barvas men left Moody and Maclennan stranded upfield, as main threat, Ali "Barvas", whizzed down the right like Usain Bolt. Crossley somehow caught him and they arm-wrestled their way along the left-side of the Blues' box. "Ostrich" checked, moved back to move inside; Crossley reached back across him with his right knee and leg; Ali stumbled. A penalty was awarded. It was one of those decisions which are right or wrong, depending on which side you support. Anyway, the wronged player converted the perfect penalty. Beaton guessed correctly, to his right, but it was so well-struck, low and hard, he had no chance. **1-3.**

Desperate times require ..... ? On 74 minutes Alonso's exit allowed "V.P." to replace Moody at the back, and Calum Tom became main striker, but Lady Fortune is a cruel mistress; immediately Action Man Crossley injured his ankle and was side-lined, leaving Carloway to play out the final 14 minutes with 10 men.

Miraculously, however, the Blues almost scored twice in three minutes. A "Tolsta" run from left midfield led to him laying off a square ball right to the advancing "Sqwegg", to crack a right-foot drive off the top of Macaskill's right-side bar and over. Then an Anderson through ball on the right found "Sqwegg" breaking unmarked and he lobbed the ball in first-time square to the arriving Moody, to turn back slightly in the centre, 12 metres out, and hook the ball back past a helpless Macaskill. **2-3.**

Try as they might, they were not to create another clear chance, and, in typical Lewis fashion, abandoned all thoughts of damage limitation, defence, etc., as they poured forward in search of an unlikely equalizer. West simply had to wait, then sweep forward. On 87 minutes, a swift break through the centre saw the ball flashed leftwards into the box, dummied by "Murchadh", and Martin Stewart gathered it, advanced and, as Beaton came to him, lifted it carefully high over his left shoulder into the far top corner of the net. **2-4.** The nightmare wasn't yet over; in injury-time a similar swift break, this time down the right, saw the square ball 10 metres from the right bye-line, drilled home expertly under Beaton by Ali "Barvas". **2-5.** Ouch!

After policy disasters, politicians are always saying lessons will be learnt. They rarely are, however, because the nature of the beast is not to listen to advice. So, what can na Gormaich learn from tonight's misery, if anything? Probably David Beaton, "D.I.", and Dan Crossley are the only Blues who can feel satisfied by this evening's performances. Granted, there were multiple absences, but the commitment and effort of those selected was never in doubt. It was the manner of play or approach that was at fault, the lack of a coherent shape operating at pace, and this resulted from uncertainty about

role, a problem unknown to the opposition.

Even with four regulars missing (six in the second half), and multiple switches in position, each Siarach seemed secure in their position (at that time) and task. Add to this, an awareness of every other player's role, no dwelling on the ball, no desire to emulate Barca tip-tap play across their own half, and a willingness to pass the early ball, long or short. Also, when West were on the ball coming forward, few of the opposition seemed to know who was to pick up whom. "Tiger", Calum Tom, and Mackinnon looked uncomfortable together at the back, leading to a poor first touch, while the leader-less midfield never gelled throughout, so the trademark killer diagonals of Anderson, creative passing of Macphail, and gritty drive of "Sqwegg" and "Tolsta" never featured; they were so busy chasing. In turn, this meant "Dokus", Crossley, and Alonso were starved of ammunition, and Dan Crossley's effectiveness as *trequartista*, dead-ball king, and ace striker, was minimised as he was endlessly switched around, unsure of what his new function was to be, and true to character, exhausted himself by trying to play every position himself (as did Calum Tom).

[Carloway](#) Man of the Match: Dan Crossley.

[West Side](#) Man of the Match: Ali Williamson.