

Lewis and Harris League:

## **Carloway 1 (0) Athletic 3 (2)**

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver 75*

*Nic Davis 2*

*Chris Adams 29*

*Robert Jones 76*

*Referee: George Macaskill.*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich.*

*Monday, 6.8.12*

*David Beaton*

*Calum Iain Macleod Seumas Macleod Gus Maciver Andrew "V.P." Macleod* ☒

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver (capt.) Billy Anderson Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod Ali "Tolsta" Maciver*

*Ben Smith Gordon "Tago" Macdonald*

*Subs.: Kevin Anderson (Gordon "Tago" Macdonald) 63; David "Cirbhig" Macleod (Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod) 78.*

*Yellow card: Andrew "V.P." Macleod 43.*

The level of local interest in this fixture was reflected in the attendance, Carloway's lowest of the season and smaller at the kick-off than the number of players who took the field. After the febrile intensity of Friday's Coop tie here versus Lochs, perhaps this might have been predicted for a match which already meant little even before the encounter on the 27th July against Point, but had been killed stone-dead by that result. Or maybe the local bush telegraph had warned prospective fans of the Blues' ongoing selection crisis and how Kevin Anderson had invited anyone west of Garynahine, south of Barvas, with a pair of football boots, regardless of experience, age, gender, race, colour, religion, or sexual proclivity, to turn up no later than 6.45 p.m. to make the team sheet. An exception was made for David Macleod who turned up 20 minutes into the game, but quality makes its own rules.

The Carloway treatment room was beginning to look like the aftermath of the battle of Stalingrad. Apart from long-term absentees, Scott Macaulay and Donald "D.I." MacIannan, injury prevented the appearances of Dan Crossley (back), Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald (knee), and Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur (leg), while iconic captain, Domhnall Mackay, had damaged his ankle (don't ask how!) and a lengthy list were unavailable: Donnie Macphail, Calum Tom Moody, Kevin "Gochan" Macleod, and Calum Iain Macdonald. Kenny "Wellies" Macaskill had returned to the mainland, but Seumas Macleod had reappeared to partner Gus Maciver in central defence, flanked by the Macleods, Calum Iain "Doune", making a welcome start, and Andrew "V.P."; behind a strong midfield in "Pongo", Billy Anderson, "Sqweg", and "Tolsta", but up front returnee, Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, was risked, alongside young Ben Smith. The manager himself sat on the bench, joined by "Cirbhig", and new faces, Stephen Macleod and Tormod "Doune" Macleod.

Gutted by 88th minute defeat to rivals Back ten days ago, in a game which delivered what is beginning to look like the decisive result of the season, Athletic knew nothing less than victory was an option in their last five League games, including the one against Lochs next week - and then must hope the scheduled collision between Lochs and Back at Leurbost in September would

deliver the appropriate result. An impressive squad took the field: 3-4-3; no Ross Macrae, "Doug" Maciver, or Donnie Macleod though, so Ali "Koch" Morrison joined Steve Clinton at the back, with Jason Maclean left; Gary Macleod, Nic Davis, Elliot Rudall, and Scott "Flapjack" Macaulay played across the middle; and Scott Maciver, Robert Jones, and Chris Adams led.

Na Gormaich's makeshift side hadn't even found their feet before they found themselves at the bottom of the cliff. Aths' first concerted attack down the right broke away left for a corner; Gary Macleod sent in the sweetest of inswingers to be met towards the near post awkwardly by Scott Maciver 8 metres out, but the ball spun away and back out to Macaulay. He curled it in again from 22 metres to be met at the near post by Nic Davis 8 metres from goal, who nodded down and across Beaton, and just inside the far post. A minute later an enormous free-kick by Rudall from the centre circle flew over the bar, before proceedings gradually settled into a desultory, formless scrap, largely dictated by an aggressive Aths' midfield, which allowed the front-runners to shape-shift repeatedly and feed each other. An uncertain Blues' midfield were unable to attack them, were continually beaten to the ball, caught on the ball, so the Carloway's front duo were starved of the ball and dropped from contention, permitting Clinton and "Koch" to defend high.

The quick goal had removed urgency from the play, however; the Stornoway side took their time, no doubt cheered by the unfolding news from Sgoil nan Loch. Half-chances did appear for the Blues: on 16 minutes a flurry on the right let Calum Iain "Doune", ten metres into the Aths' half on the right touchline, float a high diagonal into the box but Macritchie was alive to the danger. Three minutes later the ball broke to "Tolsta" in the centre but his drive from 25 metres veered right into the croft. However, the general flow of the game was relentlessly towards Beaton. After 21 minutes the pace ratcheted up a gear as Beaton had to move smartly to beat away another deadly Macleod corner from the left creeping home under his right-side bar. Two minutes later he was tested by a central Jones strike from 20 metres, before tipping a Rudall right-footer over expertly from the same spot.

On 29 minutes the game died as a contest when a Macaulay break supplied Jones on the left touchline; he doubled back off Calum Iain "Doune", then sent a deep swinging right-foot diagonal to Scott Maciver running free on the right to bring down perfectly, move to the bye-line, then whip back a waist-high cross 10 metres out for the unmarked Adams to half-volley home at the far post. The snooze-athon re-commenced, *par excellence*.

Athletic did not have to alter anything; more of the same, if you please, would see the victory out. The options for Kevin Anderson were severely limited. No one was actually playing **badly**; in fact, everyone was performing as hard as they could; the patchwork quilt was simply not gelling. He had to continue as things were and hope the heavens didn't open. "Tago" had, perhaps, been brought back too early; Ben Smith was simply not getting the ball at his feet or in front of him, facing Macritchie, to challenge Clinton or "Koch". Matters did improve, for a period. Whether or not it was the two-goal cushion, the news that Lochs were struggling, or the Blues' engine room suddenly fired

into life, but Athletic appeared to drift slightly, and the power and drive of "Pongo" and Billy Anderson, became apparent, backed by the strong running of "Sqweg" and "Tolsta". Rightaway, Anderson got a 30-metre drive in from the centre but it went straight to Macritchie; then, on 54 minutes, a move across the line diagonally - "Pongo" to Anderson to "Tolsta" - forward to "Sqweg", 22 metres out on the left, 16 metres from the bye-line, saw the midfielder lift a right-foot sweep high over Macritchie to bounce on the top of the far-side bar and over.

This resuscitated Athletic: on the hour Maciver, escaping Macleod, 22 metres out, slipped the ball leftwards across the edge of the box but Jones's attempted conversion from 16 metres was blocked for a corner by Beaton's right foot. On 65 minutes na Gormaich retaliated down the left, but Anderson's low cross 10 metres from the bye-line saw "Pongo" blocked by Clinton 16 metres out. Then a mazy run by "Doune" inwards into the Aths' box was eventually crowded out as he approached the opposition box. As Athletic coasted, Carloway kept pushing: a "Sqweg" free-kick from 24 metres flew over; then "Tolsta" broke from the left halfway line, beat two men, wall-passed to Anderson on the edge of the box, but overran the return, then hooked the ball backwards, as he fell, past Macritchie's right-hand post from 14 metres.

Then the show unexpectedly left the script: on 75 minutes a high free-kick from Seumas Macleod on the halfway line centrally found "Pongo" moving backwards into the Aths' box unmarked. Macritchie moved forward but was unable to prevent him, 16 metres out, nodding it with the top of his head back and over him into the unguarded net. Suddenly we had a contest - or might have had, if Aths hadn't immediately wakened from their slumber and responded *tout de suite*. Down the right they came and Macleod(?) switched the ball diagonally inwards from the right touchline, 25 metres into the Carloway half, to Maciver, who turned off his marker leftwards along the box, to release the early ball to Jones moving off the last man and into the box, to clip the ball neatly past the rushing Beaton's left from 16 metres. Fourteen minutes' somnolence followed - "Koch" didn't even have an argument with the referee - before George Macaskill, thankfully, allowed everyone to go home.

For Carloway, this was essentially a damage-limitation exercise and, from that point of view, they were successful. Indeed, for a limited period in the second half, when Athletic seemed to lose their way, na Gormaich, astonishingly, looked within touching distance of a draw. That said, Athletic controlled most of the play and, apart from this 20-minute period when Carloway clawed their way back into the game, always appeared able to step up a gear when required. Four League victories are well within their capabilities but, unfortunately, their fate may be decided elsewhere.

For Carloway, the future is uncertain, and could be decidedly grim, considering the injured list. If this is unchanged, and half a team of out-of-contract mainland stars don't arrive on Friday at Fivepenny on the Ness bus to sign for the night, it looks increasingly likely that Friday night will be a very, very uncomfortable evening for Carloway aficionados. And it goes on: Gus

Maciver sustained a second half leg injury tonight, refused to be substituted, and limped off badly into the night. Yet another who may be unavailable the following weekend in the Coop Cup SF versus Barra or Point.

Athletic Man of the Match: Nic Davis.

[Carloway](#) Man of the Match: Seumas Macleod.

Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	+/-	Points
Lochs	13	9	3	1	42	17	25	30
Back	12	9	1	2	36	19	17	28
Stornoway Athletic	12	8	3	1	35	17	18	27
Carloway	13	7	1	6	37	24	13	22