

Eilean an Fhraoich Cup Final:

## West Side 2 (0) Carloway 1 (1)

Mark "Doug" Maciver 61  
Scott Maciver 67

Billy Anderson 5

Ref.: Robert Mackay.

At Fivepenny.

Friday, 10.8.12.

Attendance: 600+

Gordon Craigie (Lochs)

Seumas Macleod Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Kenny Smith (Muir of Ord Rovers)

Stuart Macdonald (United) Andrew "Tago" Maciver Donnie Macphail Billy Anderson Dan Crossley

Gordon MacIennan (United) ☒ Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald

Subs.: Calum Iain Macdonald (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 57; Kenny "Beag" MacIennan (Billy Anderson) 61; Donald "D.I." MacIennan (Donnie Macphail) 81.

Yellow cards: Gordon MacIennan 75.

All roads led to Fivepenny tonight as the Atlantic rim's two finest prepared to slug it out - even the Gazette dusted down the map and found Ness; one day, Tam Cowan perhaps? Alan Hansen? No, perhaps not. Chris Macdonald might soon change that ranking order. Thankfully, the Leodhasaich responded with an attendance any Highland League team would die for. Carloway were attempting, of course, to expiate the group nightmare of their last final, the August 2010 Coop débacle, against the same adversaries, when - surprise, surprise - they had followed what is now becoming a recognizable pattern of early dominance in possession and territory, failure to capitalize on several half-chances, rapid disappearance from midfield, then being put to a very hot sword by a more resourceful, incisive opponent, who, with half the effort, achieved ten times the reward.

That night na Gormaich had huffed and puffed; Colin George Morrison had scored with a simple header from a corner on the right; Carloway had huffed and puffed; D.J. Clinton had broken away off Scott Graham, to make it two. The usual heroic last assault followed after Calum Tom Moody pulled back John Campbell's late third, but in vain, naturally. Likewise, a year earlier in the Moldova Lewis, a 2-0 lead had been halved by ace Bacach striker, "Bloxy", on the stroke of half-time and from then on the Blues had disappeared downhill at Mach 4-speed into the mist and darkness of the Garrabost evening. The season before, in the Jock Stein, and two years earlier in the same Cup and in the Lewis, there had been straightforward thrashings, 0-7; 0-4; 1-4, against their then-nemesis, Lochs.

Like the Jacobites in '45-46, na Gormaich have seemed capable of grinding out momentous cup runs since their arrival *en scène*- think of last season's monumental HAC campaign, which must have boosted the Black Isle and Ullapool economies astronomically - but in finals the same lions metamorphose mysteriously into shadows. Lord Lucan hides among the cobwebs in the trophy room. West Side, Ladbroke's favourites, were unlikely to have been the opponents of choice tonight, having become **the** Cup team

*du jour* on the Long Island, in this, their **fifth** consecutive EaF final, with two successes to add to their 2010 Coop Cup triumph.

Lately, Carloway's treatment room has resembled the casualty department at Ospadal nan Eilean. Who would actually be fit tonight? More appropriately, who would claim to be fit? The management opted for a high-risk 3-5-2 formation, with Domhnall Mackay, picking up Scott Graham, flanked by returnee, Seumas Macleod, on Scott Maciver (Athletic), and guest, Kenny Smith. This allowed Stuart Macdonald to move forward to right wing-back to stand on Duncan "Doug" Maciver's (Athletic) toes. Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald led with Gordon MacIennan on his right, while Dan Crossley was given the entire left-side to patrol, a daunting prospect when the pace and creativity of Ali "Barvas" Macleod was considered. Andrew "Tago" Maciver and Billy Anderson were entrusted with the power and drive in the centre on either side of playmaker, Donnie Macphail, and hopefully blunting the effectiveness of his Siarach namesake, Dan. Amazingly, Donald "D.I." MacIennan and Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur were on the bench, alongside Calum Iain Macdonald, Kenny "Beag" MacIennan, newly back from Mozambique (don't ask him about his luggage!), and Kevin "Barra" Macneil.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the best goalkeeper on the island, Daniel MacIennan (Point), was not between the sticks for West (has Iain Gillies retired?), but young Peter Macaskill started, behind a 3-5-2 set-up, with Donnie Smith, Ally "Norman Hunter" Williamson, and Duncan Maclean the last line of defence. There was no Johnny Wallace (twisted ankle) or Colin George Morrison in midfield (has anyone in Lewis under the age of 25 not climbed a mountain in Africa?); Ali "Ostrich" and "Doug" Maciver were on either side of Gordon Campbell, Dan Macphail, and Liam Coleman (United). Grant Hunter could afford to leave top hitmen, Chris Adams (Athletic) and the other Ali "Barvas", scorer of that inspired cracker in the HAC at Garrabost, in the bull-pen with youngsters, Innes Iain Morrison and Timmy Hunter (?).

So, all to play for on yet another beautiful, windless (!!!!) Niseach evening. An oxymoron. Something wrong with the jet stream, obviously. The usual nervy sparring of a decider characterised the opening minutes, then **BANG!** MacIennan was sent clear down the right touchline and, 18 metres from the bye-line, whipped a low square ball into West's box, which "Dokus" gathered, turned off his marker to the right bye-line, and lifted high to his left, to be headed outwards. "Pongo's" head touched it on and down and Anderson, 8 metres out to the left of goal, thrashed a half-volley high into the roof of the net.

Naturally, this unsettled the Barvas men and as the Blues pressed their advantage, some desperate tackles caused the free-kicks to flow, and half-chances to appear. On 10 minutes a Macphail free-kick, 5 metres into the West half on the right, broke down off the pack to "Pongo", 20 metres from goal, but his shot went straight up. Four minutes later another Macphail dead-ball on the right touchline caused a penalty-box melée, with "Pongo" eventually heading over. Ali "Barvas" did escape down the right but his vicious low cross from the bye-line was read by Kenny Smith. On 19 minutes

it was MacIennan's turn to hit Skylab, when an Anderson free-kick on the left, 24 metres out, broke to him 20 metres from goal. On 22 minutes yet another free-kick rebounded out to the left to "Dokus", who lifted it back in, but "Pongo" skied it from 14 metres.

Signs of awakening started to appear from West Side. On 25 minutes a move on the left set up Campbell in the centre, 25 metres out, to fire the Siarachs' first direct attempt at goal but Craigie was untroubled. A minute later an exquisite trademark corner from Crossley on the left forced Williamson to head clear off his goal-line at West's left-hand post, but the balance of the play, the "fee" of the game, seemed, inexorably, to be shifting. On 28 minutes, on the right, the ball was played back to Ali "Barvas", midway into the Blues' half, on the touchline and he sent an inch-perfect Martin Peters special over a defence dragged left after joint thorns-in-the-flesh, Graham and Maciver, to Campbell on the penalty spot, to head high to Craigie's left, but the keeper read it well. Two minutes later a Graham cross from the left pinpointed Maciver in the box but he was crowded out. On 33 minutes it was Scott Graham's turn to be blocked as he burst into the box.

The Carloway midfield were rapidly losing their grip as Anderson and Maciver began to feel the pace, Crossley was overworked, "Dokus" didn't look fully fit, and MacIennan was isolated. On 38 minutes a cross from the right did come to Donnie Macphail on the left, 14 metres out, but he shot wide of Macaskill's right-hand post. Craigie then had to beat Maciver to a dangerous "Ostrich" corner on the right before, on 43 minutes, West's best chance so far arrived; a huge Duncan Maclean free-kick from the centre circle, was headed out by Mackay to the lurking Scott Maciver, but he sliced his shot uncharacteristically wide from 16 metres. A minute later na Gormaich's opportunity to put one hand on the EaF came - and went: an Ali "Barvas" corner was punched away to his right by Craigie; the break was on, and MacIennan sent a long ball downfield on the right, chased by "Dokus" and Ally Williamson. The defender tried to shield the ball out, 20 metres from goal, but as the pair wrestled for it, "Dokus" got a foot to it, the defender fell over, and "Dokus" moved inwards. Macaskill and Maclean moved towards him but, rather than slot it across goal, hoping to reach "Pongo", he elected to drive it hard at the keeper from the corner of the 6-metre box;. However, Macaskill blocked well.

An ominous feeling was, no doubt, spreading throughout the Carloway support: from the thirty-minute mark, the edge that the Blues had held in the early exchanges had dissipated and West Side were slowly, but unquestionably, gaining the initiative; excellent performances from the Macleod-Mackay-Smith trio was masking the continual threat of Ali "Barvas"-Maciver-Graham, though the line was pushed deeper and deeper as Dan Macphail orchestrated Coleman (Morrison from 55 minutes)-Campbell-"Doug" Maciver behind them. On 49 minutes a nasty, low "Dokus" free-kick from the left corner of the box was seen late by the keeper, who had to push it out, but there were no takers. Where is Archie "Uibhisteach" when you need him? Two minutes later it was Scott Maciver's turn to escape on the left, then lay the ball back to Macphail, but his shot from 16 metres was punched over the bar expertly by Craigie.

A brutal war of attrition was unfolding, as Carloway's defence dug in doggedly, while simultaneously trying to kick-start a malfunctioning engine before them, with every ball going forward leftwards to feed the irrepressible Crossley. However, in the space of the next ten minutes the Cup was wrapped up irrevocably in Barvas blue. On 59 minutes a Duncan Maclean free-kick 24 metres out on the left, crept untouched past Craigie's left-hand post, before Scott Maciver broke down the right. Wherever Maciver goes, a defence tends to follow, and as the line was drawn rightwards, he slipped the ball right to Ali "Barvas", received the return, then unleashed a deep, inviting outswinger over them towards "Doug" Maciver ghosting in off the line to meet perfectly with a diving header, 14 metres from goal, and send an absolute peach into a keeper's nightmare spot: on the ground, inside the left-hand post. Geoff Astle never did it better!

Six minutes later a low Ali "Barvas" cross from the right invited a hooked clearance by Smith, 12 metres out by the Blues' left-hand post, but the ball spun backwards off his boot, towards the predatory Maciver, who was first to react to the loose ball and slipped it wide of Craigie from 8 metres.

The last twenty minutes now became a re-run of na Gormaich's usual Cup Final miseries: since the 55th minute they had been defending deeper and deeper by choice or circumstance; suddenly they were behind; even the earlier arrival of Calum Iain Macdonald for "Dokus" had had little effect in front of a non-existent midfield; Kenny "Beag" replaced Anderson, who, like "Pongo" had run himself to a standstill, with Andrew "Tago" pushing forward, but the edge remained with the Barvas side and now it was na Gormaich who were conceding the dangerous free-kicks around their box. Ideal for a dead-ball king like Ali "Barvas".

On 75 minutes one deadly inswinger, from the touchline, 10 metres into the Blues' half, was met by Maciver, 16 metres out, but his looping header was helped on to the top of the bar by Craigie's hand. Two minutes later a long low clearance found Maciver again midway within the Blues' half leftish. He turned left off his marker, made the bye-line, but his squared ball rolled across the 6-metre line before Graham could arrive. On 80 minutes a throw-in on the left came to Kenny "Beag" on the edge of the box but he pulled his drive wide. Carloway endlessly sought the magic key now, with "D.I." replacing Macphail, and Macleod and Crossley each having spells up front, but neither side created any further goal-worthy chances, and the side that had begun with a bang, disappeared into the Fivepenny mist with a whimper.

So, once again, the *"galacticos"* fell at the last hurdle, in agonisingly familiar style. True, the EaF format handicapped them - no Gus Maciver or "Gochan"; arguably it benefitted West, with the Aths' boys, though they lost "D.J.". Injuries to the likes of Scott Macaulay didn't help either, but the lack of pace and absence of invention coming forward became more and more obvious as the game progressed.

The Blues' two most gifted performers were occupied man-marking: Seumas

Macleod wholly by Lewis's top striker, Scott Maciver, and Dan Crossley partly, by an unsquashable force of nature on the right in Ali "Barvas". Domhnall Mackay, who doubles as enforcer, had the persistent problem of Scott Graham to deal with. When "Togo", Anderson and "Dokus" were on full throttle, for the first 30-40 minutes, "Togo's" drive, Anderson's ball-winning and diagonals, and "Dokus's" pace pressured the Smith-Williamson-Maclean axis, but the Barvas men had only to do the Birmingham run with them for that period and wait for the shine to come off the ball. Then their greater all-round stamina and tactical nous began to tell. "Bubble" was head-to-head with Dan Macphail most of the time, so in the second half, Donnie Macphail often carried the midfield whenever Crossley minded "Barvas"; and Gordon MacIennan doubled as Napoleon on Elba. West did not falter throughout from their game-plan, riding the early pressure, to achieve a workmanlike edge on the half-hour, before the imagination of Macphail and an inspired forward trio carried them home.

[West Side](#) Man of the Match: Duncan Maclean.

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