

Moldova Lewis Cup Round 2:

Carloway 4 (2) Lochs 1 (0)

Ali "Tolsta" Maciver 40

Calum Tom Moody (o.g.) 70

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 43, 68

Domhnall Mackay (pen.) 47

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Monday, 20.8.12.

Ref.: Robert Mackay.

David Beaton

Seumas Macleod  Calum Tom Moody Gus Maciver Donald "D.I" MacIannan

Andrew "Tago" Maciver Billy Anderson Domhnall Mackay(capt.) Ali "Tolsta" Maciver

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 

Subs.: Donnie Macphail (Gus Maciver) 54; Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod (Billy Anderson) 67;

Jamie Macdonald (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 76.

Yellow cards: Seumas Macleod 17; Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 41.

Donald "Lava" Macleod Gordon Maciver

Jonathan Smith Jim O'Donnell Angie Campbell  Donald "Nomie" Macdonald

David Martin Graeme Mackenzie  Ali Mackenzie Peter Mackenzie

Cameron Houston

Subs.: Gordon Craigie (Gordon Maciver) 45; Allan Farrell (Gordon Craigie) 79.

Red cards: Graeme Mackenzie 73; Angie Campbell 90+2.

2012 has certainly been the season for bone-jarring confrontations between the two rivals, each seeming delighted to inflict the maximum damage on each other's competitive ambitions. Lochs wounded Carloway's League aspirations, probably terminally, with two edgy victories, 1-0 at Cnoc a' Choilich on the opening day, then 2-1 at Leurbost in June; while the Blues returned the favour twice with barely-concealed glee, by dumping the Maroons unceremoniously out of the Jock Stein and Coop Cups, both at home 2-0, in two contests reminiscent of mediaeval war games. Indeed, ties between the two sides have superseded collisions against West Side as opportunities for Carloway to hone their skills in unarmed combat and Richter-scale tackling.

Lochs are by no means reluctant to meet the Blues halfway, and both sides don't simply wish to win; they wish to inflict heart-breaking defeat, in a perfect illustration of the Gore Vidal maxim, "*It's not enough that I succeed; others must fail*". They actively enjoy thrashing each other, as much as they both enjoy demolishing the Bacachs.

So, honours even, going into tonight's contest. For once, Carloway were spoiled for choice: apart from long-term absentees, Scott Macaulay and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, the only forced no-show was Dan Crossley (virus), although Kevin "Barra" Macneil, Andrew "V.P." Macleod, and Calum Iain Macdonald were unavailable. Mindful of what they might face - a "Lava" attack supported by the inventive "Nomie" and elegant Campbell, not to mention the one-man SAS assault and rescue team, Peter Mackenzie - a

solid midfield trio was preferred in "Pongo", Anderson, and Mackay. These were abetted on the left by the drive of "Tolsta", the four in front of the granite of Moody and Maciver, who were flanked by further grit in Seumas Macleod and "D.I.". "Gochan" was assisted up front on his right by the trickiness of "Dokus" to test the pace - and patience - of the Mackenzie stopper duo.

On their left was a welcome re-appearance of one-time class act on Lewis, David Martin, thankfully for the Blues more left-back tonight than unplayable left-winger. Na Gormaich were further encouraged by the non-appearances of animateur David Macmillan plus Roddy Morrison, Chris Mackay, and Robert Mackenzie.

Well, you cannot win - or lose - if you do not play. Lochs opened with their traditional, disconcerting rush (it works often. Why not?), but the ball was eventually cleared long on the left, where "Tolsta" managed to switch it in to Anderson. He dragged the ball into the centre well, but his drive from 22 metres was flicked over the bar confidently by Houston. The ball was cleared out and the expected midfield battle ensued - literally, ending on 9 minutes with a stunning Jimmy McIlroy special from Campbell between Maciver and Macleod for Peter Mac to leave "D.I." for dead, get to the bye-line, and send in a high tempter which was scrambled away for a corner. In it came from Carloway's left, then broke out but awkwardly for "Nomie", and his snatched right-foot hook from 20 metres went high over the bar. Two minutes later "Tolsta" outpaced O'Donnell down the left to free "Gochan" in the centre but Houston blocked him well from 16 metres. The resulting corner came back to "Tolsta" on the left and his curled diagonal was headed over by Moody from 14 metres.

The power of the Carloway midfield started to stifle the creativity of "Nomie" and Campbell and an edge was created. "Lava" and Maciver were increasingly isolated among the fridge-freezers in the Carloway defence. The battle for control caused the temperature to soar; plenty of unsolicited advice was being offered to the referee by player and fan alike.

On 21 minutes a series of mistimed clearances saw the ball come to Anderson 24 metres out centrally and his right-foot drive thudded against the outside of Houston's left-hand post and past. On 28 minutes it was Lochs' turn to come close, when a "Nomie" corner on the left was met head-high at the near post by O'Donnell but his bullet header whizzed just outside the post. Seven minutes later a move down the right came square across field to the same player, but his low shot from 24 metres was saved competently by Beaton to his right.

Na Gormaich were edging territory and possession but the chances - few as there were, as each defence fought doggedly - were even. On 37 minutes, "Pongo" broke on the right, then slotted it inwards and forward to "Dokus", 16 metres out, who turned out then lobbed back across the line to Macleod, but his attempt went a metre over the bar. A minute later Campbell drove likewise from 18 metres when a "Nomie" corner on the left cleared the defence to Peter Mac on the right, who cut back high to him from the bye-line.

As half-time approached, honours even, an explosive five minutes unfolded. "Dokus" received the ball on the halfway line, on the right touchline. He tricked his way past two Maroons, before sending a glorious low diagonal behind the high back Mackenzie line for "Tolsta" to burst on to in the centre. He seemed to lose control as the ball spun high, but as it dropped, he let fly from 24 metres with a right-foot cracker high into Houston's top-left corner. 1-0. Three minutes later Anderson was released down the right and midway into the Lochs' half he sent a low diagonal ahead of "Gochan" into the box which Houston appeared to have, then inexplicably lose as Gochan challenged. It broke forward to the right, and the striker stayed calm and stroked it home past a despairing defender from 10 metres. 2-0. Right on half-time Houston had to move sharply once more to touch a curling Anderson free-kick, 24 metres out on the left, past the post, with "Pongo" heading the resultant corner just wide of the post.

Half-time: Carloway 2 Lochs 0.

For forty minutes the game had hung in the balance, with Carloway controlling its shape and flow, but Lochs, typically, always dangerous coming forwards. The next five had changed all that. In another two minutes it was all over. Finally, there was a flash of the old "Lava", after 46 minutes, as a long ball from midfield split the defence to the right to allow him to edge behind Moody into the box. It was a difficult, but possible chance, but from 16 metres he put his shot wide of Beaton's right hand and the far post.

A free-kick on the right followed for the Blues, just inside the Lochs' half. Anderson hoisted a high diagonal in and as the line moved back the ball was glanced out to the right for a corner. Robert Mackay pointed to the spot. A furious row erupted. Most fans, and players, were mystified. Ali Mackenzie had been adjudged to have tripped/held "Gochan" moving inwards towards the ball. Houston chose right; Mackay blasted right of centre. 3-0.

The mercury, at white heat level already, shot up even more, as Lochs sought a quick way back, helped by the departure of Gus Maciver and Mackay's consequent move back to cover, with Donnie Macphail entering central midfield. Peter Mac moved forward into the centre to profit, Jim O'Donnell dropping back left, and David Martin also pushed forward left. Carloway, three-up, could afford to invite them forward, then break fast.

Immediately a further chance appeared as a long through ball sent "Gochan" and Anderson clear behind a thin defence. "Gochan" moved into the box, drew Houston, then slipped it square to Anderson on his right on the penalty spot to move forward to slot home, but the keeper miraculously lunged sideways to his left to get an outstretched foot in front of it, and the ball was scrambled away. A plague of free-kicks now arose from the ensuing derring-do nature of play, with ferocious tackling resulting in a rush of free-kicks around the Carloway box. But once again Carloway broke, this time on 59 minutes, with "Dokus" on the right tricking his way through, then cutting in, but from 20 metres, he placed his shot just outside Houston's left-hand post.

The Leurbost men, for all they were continually pressing forward into the Carloway half now, could not create a clear opening through a crowded last 30 metres of the Blues' half, and continually were forced to play across the line, and shoot from range. Smith shot into the side-net from 16 metres on the right, then on 64 minutes a "Lava" attempt from 20 metres left Beaton untroubled. On 68 minutes it got even darker for the Lochies, as the ball was cleared forward to "Sqweg" midway within his own half on the right. He advanced 10 metres to slot the golden ball through retreating defenders to "Dokus" breaking behind O'Donnell. The Lochs man stumbled and fell as he grappled with "Dokus", allowing "Dokus" to move into the box. The Mackenzies got back to block him but he threaded it neatly between them to the unmarked "Gochan" on the left, to slide home to Houston's right from 10 metres. 4-0.

Two minutes later, however, a glimmer of hope arrived for the Lochies when yet another "Nomie" free-kick, this time on the right, level with the 18 metre line, was fired in low, took a vicious deflection off Moody's foot, and shot back like lightning to Beaton's left and in. 4-1. Nevertheless, three minutes later, Lady Fortune was finally to desert the Maroons when Graeme Mackenzie was straight red-carded for a crunching tackle on the breaking "Dokus", escaping to his right, just inside his own half. Yet, despite this set-back, Lochs almost pulled back a second, in 79 minutes, when "Lava" swept down the right. His low cross, 16 metres from the bye-line, flashed across the Carloway goal, 8 metres out, to Angie Campbell, but just as he connected at the far post, the ball bobbed up, the strike wasn't clean, and it half-struck the post, half-struck an arriving defender, came out, and was booted over Upper Carloway and onwards to the Flannan Isles.

4-1 perhaps flattered Carloway but they certainly edged this game, mainly on the strength of an uncompromising first half, where they successfully kept Lochs at bay, minimising their clear chances, while creating a reasonable number for themselves at the Lochs end. Again, however, the Blues struggled to convert, goals 1-3 coming from a Goal-in-a Million strike, a defensive blunder, then a questionable penalty, but as Joe Mercer once claimed, if you keep the ball in the opposition's half, preferably their penalty box, the law of averages dictates that goals must come, even if it is the wind that blows the ball home. They all count.

Some say that you make your own luck and any luck that was going tonight certainly came Carloway's way. In any close game, there are usually 3-4 defining moments/decisions that determine its conclusion. They usually even themselves out over the 90 minutes. The men from Leurbost might reasonably claim this didn't happen tonight. They had plenty of luck, but it was all bad. But did they deserve any better, assuming the adage is correct and it's up to them to make their own luck? It's hard to say.

Awkward all-action hero, "Gochan", unsettled the Maroons' defence throughout, augmented by the trickiness and pace of "Dokus", pressurizing the Mackenzies endlessly, but the basis of control lay at the back in the

secure dependable form of David Beaton, Gus Maciver, and Calum Tom Moody in central defence. This allowed "Pongo", Mackay, and the Gascoigne-type game overview of Anderson, not to forget his body-shattering tackling, to break the forward moves of the endlessly troublesome "Nomie" and power-play of Peter Mackenzie. With "Lava" playing slightly deeper than expected, Gordon Maciver, then Gordon Craigie, then Allan Farrell were lost for much of the time.

Nothing in this life, including sporting prowess, lasts forever. At one time the prospect of facing the "Lava"/ "Nomie"/ David Martin triumvirate would have filled na Gormaich with dread. Those days are past, although the three just mentioned are still formidable adversaries, especially the imaginative "Nomie", now more midfield creator and dead-ball man, like David Macmillan, than striker, and all three seem tasked with bringing on the next raft of Championship winners. In their turn, Carloway have improved considerably in the last few years, recognizing it's not what's right or wrong that is important; it's what works. It's interesting to speculate how both teams' seasons will end.

Lochs Man of the Match: Donald "Nomie" Macdonald.

Carloway Man of the Match: Billy Anderson.